Leo Strauss

The Political Philosophy of Thucydides

A seminar offered in the Winter Quarter, 1962

The Department of Political Science, The University of Chicago

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Editorial Headnote:
No audiofiles from the course have survived. This transcript is based upon the original transcript, made by persons unknown to us. Ellipses that appear in the original transcript have been retained. Where the transcriber noted "inaudible" we have put ellipses in square brackets: [. . .]

The text assigned in the course was Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, with notes and a new introduction by David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Session 1: no date
Book 1, Chapters 1-23

Leo Strauss: We may begin our study of Thucydides's *History* by comparing it with those works of political philosophy, such as Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, with which we have become familiar. Political philosophy deals chiefly and primarily with the best political order, the best regime, with an arrangement which is possible but not actual. This orientation leads to the consequence that political life as it is becomes depreciated: this life, when seen in the light of the best regime, proves to be inferior. In Plato's own *Gorgias*, Socrates passes his judgment on[i] the most famous Athenian statesmen, men like Themistocles and so on, and they are all found wanting. They do not deserve serious attention. The whole sphere of what we call political greatness fades away the moment the question of the best regime is raised.[1] [Only the possible exception of the legislator–founder, a rather dim figure, survives.] Thucydides, on the other hand, thinks political life has its own light. He does not transcend it; he takes the political life, the actual city, seriously. He takes only the actual city, [and] then his account is not harmonious as the account of the best city is. After all, regardless of whether you read the *Laws* or the *Republic*, or the seventh and eighth book[s] of the *Politics*, you find a perfectly harmonious city, the best city. There is nothing rugged about it, nothing discordant: entirely different from the account given by Thucydides. We can also say this in present-day verbiage: there is nothing of "ideology" in any sense of the word in Thucydides. It is genuinely *Realpolitik,* actual politics, realism.

Now all this is due to the fact—this you all have anticipated, of course—that Thucydides is not a philosopher but an historian. But what is an historian? Now we may learn it from Aristotle in the first place. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle distinguishes the historian from the poet as follows: the historian says what has happened; the poet tells what kind of thing might happen. Therefore poetry is more philosophic and more serious than history, for poetry stays more with universals; history states the particular. What he means is this: when Thucydides speaks about Pericles, he means that individual Pericles as he was in every respect. But if Sophocles presents Antigone—that is, a human being, a woman of the type Antigone—any accidental features are utterly irrelevant. For Aristotle implies that poetry is in between philosophy and history. Philosophy and history are at opposite poles. History is simply nonphilosophic. It deals with individuals, human beings or collections of individuals, whereas philosophy deals with the species as species. Poetry is in the middle: poetry deals with [the] species *in* the individual. Philosophy deals with war as such; Thucydides deals with the Peloponnesian War from 431 to 404.

Occasionally Thucydides seems to suggest that he is an historian in this sense as Aristotle defines it: we can say a "chronicler." If you would read occasionally book 1, chapter 97,

[i] The transcript has an ellipsis here, so something may be missing from the sentence.

you would find a reference of Thucydides to such a chronicler, a man called Hellanicus,[ii] who is not good for a certain period, not exactly detailed enough, and Thucydides says that since he has neglected it, I am going to do the job, at least for this particular period. In other words, in this respect Thucydides seems to be a new chronicler. But even in this context he makes it clear that he has a different intention, a broader intention than the chronicler has. And above all, what Thucydides says in this particular place is very different from what he says in the opening of the book, where he declares his intentions most fully, and what he says there in the first part of the book excludes altogether the view that Thucydides was an historian in Aristotle's sense. At any rate, if Thucydides is an historian, he surely is an unusual historian.

The opinion has existed in our century that Thucydides was both historian and poet, or artist, or tragedian, and so on. This was an attempt to account for the unusual element in Thucydides as an historian. This suggestion has been countered by the suggestion that Thucydides's art is simply his excellence as an historian. An ordinary historian might select only the events which were important for the course of the war: the decisive battles, treaties, negotiations, and so on, only things which were important for the course of the war or its outcome. Thucydides, being an unusual historian, an excellent historian, takes also selected events which did not affect the course of the war at all, trivial incidents, but incidents which throw light on the war as a whole although they have no effect on the war as a whole; in other words, events which might be unimportant for the course of the war, but important for the understanding of this and any other war.

In contradistinction to the ordinary historian, Thucydides possesses the intelligence to see the drama in the events and the power to present that drama in the most effective manner, for example, when he makes the famous funeral speech of Pericles, and it is followed by the plague. It was so: Pericles delivered the famous speech[2] [on] the grandeur of Athens, and then there came the plague. But Thucydides was able to see how meaningful this was . . . he saw it and presented it. Or the shocking debate between the Athenians and the Melians at the end of the fifth book, where the Athenians utter atrocious perfidies,[iii] and then in the Sicilian expedition, where the Athenians are shown to act on such principles and this leads to the greatest disaster. Exactly like a tragic poet, Thucydides sees and presents the universal in the singular and only in the singular. His unrivaled quality as an historian is that like the perfect tragedian, he lets the drama tell its own tale. But unlike the tragedy proper, the Thucydidean drama is nothing but the events themselves, intelligently perceived and forcefully presented.

[ii] Hellanicus (ca. 490-405 BCE), born on the island of Lesbos, was a prolific logographer or chronicler whose *Atthis* (ca. 406), offered an account of events at Athens almost to the end of the Peloponnesian War.

[iii] The meaning of "utter perfidies" is obscure. It is not clear whether Strauss has here misspoken or the transcript is in error.

It was not of poetry that Thucydides reminded Thomas Hobbes. Unfortunately, Hobbes's introduction to his translation is not reprinted in your edition,[iv] but[3] [it] is available in the English works of Hobbes, edited by Sir William Molesworth, volume 8. The introduction is about twenty-five or thirty pages, and you can easily read it. As I said, Thucydides did not remind Hobbes of poetry. And this can be understood: Thucydides surely did not wish or intend to be a poet. He made it very clear that poets are men who make things bigger and grander than they are—at least that was true of the Greek poets—and Thucydides is anxious to show things exactly as they were. Hobbes is reminded by Thucydides not of poetry but of philosophy, especially of moral or political philosophy. The scope of history, Hobbes says, as distinguished from songs, is "profit by writing truth."[v] Two more quotations from Hobbes: "Digressions for instruction's cause, and other such open conveyances of precepts, (which is the philosopher's part), he never useth; as having so clearly set before men's eyes the ways and events of good and evil counsels, that the narration itself doth secretly instruct the reader, and more effectually than can possibly be done by precept."[vi] Notice: the philosopher teaches by precept. Well, that was an old-fashioned view, but you can see it when you read, for example, Aristotle's great book on how to establish a democracy and this or that kind of democracy: Aristotle gives precepts, not history.

In a way, the moral philosophers do the same thing. It is not so visible in Aristotle's *Ethics* as it is in the writing of Seneca and Cicero. For instance, Seneca writes a book about anger, for example, and gives you a recipe[4] [for] how to treat your irascibility.[5] [Thucydides] shows wise and unwise actions and the consequences of wise and unwise action. If you see it presented to your eyes, then you are much more deeply convinced than if you are merely told the precept in a book. Hobbes notes also that Thucydides has no exalted discourses about man and politics, for the major feature is completely narrative. In other words, Thucydides teaches us about man and politics by narrative. But the narrative . . . tells us more than the story of the Peloponnesian War; it tells us about man and politics in general, but only through narrative. Hobbes said, "Thucydides is the most politic historiographer that ever writ."[vii] And moreover, Thucydides's way of teaching by narrative as distinguished from precept is more politic, more politically effective, than the way of the philosopher. A last quotation from Hobbes: "Marcellinus saith, he was obscure on purpose; that the common people might not understand him. And not unlikely: for a wise man should so write, (though in words understood by all men), that wise men only should be able to commend him."[viii] Yet in spite of the great

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[iv] Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1959). Hobbes's introduction, "Of the Life and History of Thucydides," is included in the 1989 University of Chicago Press edition of this text, 569-86.

[v] Thomas Hobbes, "On the Life and History of Thucydides," in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, ed. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 581.

[vi] Thomas Hobbes, "On the Life and History of Thucydides," in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, 577.

[vii] Thomas Hobbes, "To the Reader," in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, xii.

[viii] Thomas Hobbes, "On the Life and History of Thucydides," in *The Peloponnesian War: The Complete Hobbes Translation*, 584.

difference between the old Hobbean historiography and the view characteristic of our age, these views seem to agree at one point, namely, that Thucydides's narrative itself does secretly instruct the reader—the narrative, not Thucydides.

Now some qualification must be inserted here because, as you will probably know, Thucydides has inserted speeches by his characters in the course of the work. Nearly a fifth of the whole work consists of such speeches. But these are of course speeches of the characters, not of Thucydides, and they have the same non-Thucydidean character, if I may say so, as does the account of the deeds themselves. Thucydides in a way is extraordinarily reticent. He says so many times that such and such a man was reputed to be wise,[ix] and he doesn't say whether he was wise or not. You have to find out, and soon, for yourself. It seems that he preferred to entrust statements of principle, of judgment, or of preference to his characters. It is mainly these passages which are quoted from Thucydides and are used on all kinds of festive occasions, [but they] are not statements by Thucydides but by his characters. For example, the very famous praise of Athenian democracy is made by Pericles, not by Thucydides. The consequences of this reticence appear most clearly from the different interpretations which the most notorious part of this work has found, and that most notorious part is the part with the dialogue between the Athenian ambassador[s] and the government of the island of Melos. In [the] absence of Thucydides's judgment on this dialogue, one could find here agreement with the position stated by the Athenian[s] of power politics, pure and simple, in its most shameless form. The severely political and military character of[6] [Thucydides's] account would serve to confirm this impression that the only thing of importance is power. But all perceptive readers of Thucydides have observed the presence in his work of that which transcends power politics, that which one may call[7] [*to anthrōpinon*].[x] But if we try to find out how the power politics and that which transcends power politics are related to one another, Thucydides does not give us an answer. He remains silent.

But after one has recovered from one's first impressions of Thucydides, one is amazed to see how many and how important judgments Thucydides[8] explicitly makes in his own name. Let us take[9] what is [perhaps] the broadest statement of this kind. It occurs in book 8, chapter 24. By the way, there are more such statements in book 8 than there are, relatively speaking, before. The inhabitants of the island of Chios, he says, along with the Spartans, are the only ones whom I have perceived who are at the same time happy, prosperous, and moderate. This implies that the Athenians lacked moderation. This is said only by implication; the Athenians also had the appearance of prosperity, but they had never combined prosperity, happiness, and moderation. It was not only the Athenians who talked with the Melians—these were already very decayed and degenerate people—but also the work of Pericles himself. Now in fact, in his praise of Pericles Thucydides doesn't say a word to the effect that Pericles was a man distinguished by moderation.

[ix] Actually there is only one such case of this usage in the work, of the Spartan king Archidamus at 1.79.2.

[x] That is, "The human" or "the humane." Cf. *The City and Man*, 145: "The contemporary interpreters of Thucydides who are perceptive note the presence in his thought of that which transcends 'power politics,' of what one may call the human or the humane." The term *to anthrōpinon* occurs at 1.22.4.

And still stranger, while the word moderation, or [*sōphrosynē*], occurs[10] infrequently, Thucydides's Pericles never uses that word, although there are three speeches of Pericles in Thucydides's work.

This most revealing silence is however rendered ambiguous by the fact that both Cleon, the immoderate successor of Pericles, and the Athenian ambassador[s] to Melos[11] praise moderation. This . . . particularly shows that men do not always praise the things which ought to be praised, or in other words, that speeches can be deceptive. This offers an important clue regarding Thucydides's tastes or preferences: the combination of prosperity with moderation. And this happens in an abstraction from Athens and particularly from Pericles. Where it seems quite strange . . . But then there is a certain ambiguity connected with the fact that some manifestly immoderate people, successors of Pericles, do use the word.

Now let me state a rule which I regard as absolutely binding, a rule which I believe in all cases known to me [is] not observed or not sufficiently observed: Do not ascribe to Thucydides any view or prejudice which is stated by one of his characters and not by himself. That is clear: a statement might be wonderfully persuasive by some great or apparently great man, but that does not mean that Thucydides himself held that view. We have to make this distinction very clear. But judiciously, the statements of Thucydidean characters may be used. In the first place, if a Thucydidean character expresses a certain broad view, we know this much: that Thucydides knew of that view.

This can become important in a certain context; for example, if Thucydides expresses a certain thought but with brevity, not developing it, and thinking about it we observe certain implications, and[12] if Thucydides also agreed with these implications, then we will know it if we find these implications stated by Thucydidean characters. I will give you an example. In the beginning of the book Thucydides says that the Athenians and the Peloponnesians were at their highest point in regard to[13] war when the war broke out. At their highest point. Now we are entitled then to regard it as possible that Thucydides thought that the war itself would be the beginning of their decline. The highest point: you can't go higher. Now just as in the growth of animals and human beings there is a highest point, a peak—an *akmē*, in Greek—and then there is only a decline. This suspicion would be confirmed by what Thucydides says at the end of the introduction about how the Peloponnesian War was the most destructive Greek war, in which men, earth, fire, water, and air conspired to inflict sufferings on Greece. If it is the most destructive Greek war according to Thucydides, it can be assumed that after the war, Greece, in regard to power, was no longer what she was at the beginning of the war.

Now there is a principle involved which is stated not by Thucydides but by Pericles, and which runs as follows: "All things will naturally also decay." Thucydides does not say it, Pericles says it. But I think we are entitled to say that this Periclean utterance is the background of what Thucydides says in his own name from the beginning of the work until the end. This is confirmed by one story in the introduction, book 1, chapters 1 to 23. The ordinary name for the section is the "Archaeology," which name means not digging and such things but the account of the olden times up to the Persian Wars—from the very

beginning to the Persian War. Now then he describes in a certain context—Thucydides speaks of certain observations one could make during the war, when the Athenian people made a religious purification on the island of Delos and all [the] graves were dug up. And then a few pages later, when he speaks of the ruins of other cities, he raises the issue of how far the ruins of a city give you a notion of the power of that city. And he says, for example, if Sparta were in ruins and Athens were in ruins, Sparta would appear to be much weaker than she was, whereas Athens would appear to be much more powerful than she was. That is perfectly sensible and clear in the context, but it has an additional meaning. Thucydides, who as it were stood at the old graves of these barbarians on the island of Delos, is able to see himself as someone else standing at the ruins of Athens and Sparta centuries after their destruction. This perspective, the perishability of everything, including the highest and greatest achievements, must always be taken into consideration. And this, I suppose, differs substantially from quite a few other historians.

Thucydides breaks the silence by the judgments which he makes in his own name, but also by the speeches of his characters. But that is a more difficult secret. There occur more statements of the principles of judgment in the speeches of his characters than in what Thucydides himself says. This means that the characters raise questions which Thucydides may have answered in a very different manner than his characters did, but which we can be sure[14] [that he] recognized as questions. When he speaks in the famous chapter[15] [22] about the way in which he treated the deeds on the one hand and the speeches on the other, he uses the terms “how it seems to me” in one but not in both cases. There is no “how it seems to me” in the account of the deeds, but “how it seemed to me” does affect the speeches. Now in which way? We must be very careful. The speeches are written by Thucydides, that is clear, but they are meant to be really clear and effective statements of what the actual speakers on the occasion said, so that we can be sure that Pericles gave a funeral speech in praise of Athens which in substance contained what we read in Thucydides.

What is the peculiarity of the speeches as speeches in contradistinction to Thucydides’s own speech, his history? No “speech” ever serves the purpose of revealing the truth as such. Thucydides’s speech serves no other purpose except to reveal the truth about the Peloponnesian War and whatever that implies. The speeches are supposed to exhort or dehort, to accuse or to defend, to praise or to criticize. All speeches serve a particular political purpose, or are partial in the two definitions of the term. A particular situation: Pericles’s funeral speech serves the purpose of encouraging the Athenians to go on with the war; and partial because Pericles looks at the war from an Athenian point of view, and from the point of view of some particular party in Athens, perhaps. Thucydides’s speech serves no particular political purpose and is, according to his intentions, surely impartial. Then the speeches of the characters abound with praise and blame, whereas Thucydides’s speech is reserved. Now Thucydides’s thematic statement on how he treated the speeches and deeds occurs in the context which is devoted to the contrast between speeches and deeds. Let us look it up. We will begin with chapter 21.

Reader:

Now he that by the arguments here adduced shall frame a judgment of the things past and not believe rather that they were such as the poets have sung or prose-writers have composed, more delightfully to the ear than conformably to the truth, as being things not to be disproved and by length of time turned for the most part into the nature of fables without credit, but shall think them here searched out by the most evident signs that can be, and sufficiently too, considering their antiquity; he, I say, shall not err. And though men always judge the present war wherein they live to be the greatest, and when it is past, admire more those that were before it, yet if they consider of this war by the acts done in the same, it will manifest itself to be greater than any of those before mentioned.[xi]

LS: From the deed, they will judge from the deed. Why does Hobbes say "acts"? And the speeches must be judged in the light of the deeds, for example, the speeches of the poets and other story tellers. And as I said, [it is] in the context of the *contrast* between the reliable deeds and the unreliable speeches [that] Thucydides discusses his own speeches and deeds, namely, the speeches and deeds recorded in his own work.

Reader:
What particular persons have spoken when they were about to enter into the war or when they were in it were hard for me to remember exactly, whether they were speeches which I have heard myself or have received at the second hand. But as any man seemed to me that knew what was nearest to the sum of the truth of all that had been uttered to speak most agreeably to the matter still in hand, so I have made it spoken here.

LS: As I said: "as it seemed to me." What seemed to Thucydides affected the way in which he wrote the speeches.

Reader:
But of the acts themselves done in the war, I thought not fit to write all that I heard from all authors nor such as I myself did but think to be true—

LS: "Think to be true"? No, "as it seemed to me." In the cases of the deed, what "seemed to him" was excluded. In the cases of the speeches, what seemed to him enters. Somehow we must see which things.

Reader:
but only those whereat I[xii] myself present and those of which with all diligence I had made particular inquiry. And yet even of those things it was hard to know the certainty, because such as were present at every action spake not all after the same manner, but as they were affected to the parts or as they could remember.

[xi] Thucydides 1.21.
[xii] In the original: "but only those whereat I was myself present"

To hear the history rehearsed, for that there be inserted in it no fables, shall be perhaps not delightful.

LS: "Shall be perhaps not delightful"—notice the "perhaps." Thucydides does not exclude the possibility that this history be delightful, but it is perhaps less delightful. It depends for what kind of purpose.

Reader:
But he that desires to look into the truth of things done and which (according to the condition of humanity) may be done again, or at least their like, he shall find enough herein to make him think it profitable. And it is compiled rather for an everlasting possession than to be rehearsed for a prize.[xiii]

LS: We will take up these formulations later on when we are in the proper context. Deeds alone can be trusted. Speeches are always deceptive and sometimes even mean to deceive. They must be judged in the light of the deed[s]. Now it is true that deeds themselves become accessible partly and even decisively only through speeches. How do we know of battles in Sicily if you were not told by someone? But if speeches really do give light to the deeds, they also obscure them. So speeches have an essential ambiguity which we must never forget. And with their silences the speeches reveal more of Thucydides himself than does the account of the deeds, and this Thucydides indicates by his intentional use of the expression "it seems to me" when he speaks of the deeds on the one hand and the speeches on the other.

Granted that no speech expresses an opinion which was not or could not have been present to the speaker's mind while the speaker was delivering the speech, and that most speeches mean to express the opinion of[16] [the speaker] himself, surely the wording of the speeches stems from Thucydides. I will give you an example; it is very shortly after the introduction: the first two speeches of the work, the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians in Athens. Now the first word of the Corcyraean speech—they are rather crooked people, by the way—is, in literal English translation, the adjective "just." It cannot be properly rendered in English translation.[xiv] In the Corinthians' speech, the first word is the adjective "necessary." Now this is clearly Thucydides's speech and not that of the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians. And what does this mean? This is something which neither speech conveys by itself, but both together as composed by the inspired Thucydides: the relation, the difference, the tension, the opposition between justice or right and necessity. Thucydides never says that this is the major theme of his history and of any political history. He never says so, but if we read the beginning—you will see how necessary it is to look up the original, if possible—the thought indicated by these two opening words, the tension of right and necessity, is Thucydides's thought, not the speakers' thought. And this thought, the most forceful reminder of the secret difficulty

[xiii] Thucydides 1.22.
[xiv] Since "just" is very clearly the proper English rendering of Greek *dikaion,* Strauss must mean that one cannot replicate in English the Greek construction that places this word at the beginning of the sentence to serve as its keynote.

regarding justice, illuminates everything which went before and everything which follows.

Now Thucydides has treated every subject with reserve. He never obtrudes his judgment. Now there is a particularly famous case. Thucydides was an Athenian general for some time, and his generalship was not successful. Needless to say that Thucydides did not, as many generals have done since, write an apology or say that it was the fault of my colleagues, not of me. Not a word to this effect. Now someone who studies these things with great care, with great understanding of the topography and all these things, will come to the conclusion that Thucydides does give a vindication of his work, of his activities as a general, but it is written in such a way that a very few readers, only fellow generals, can understand. So no great anxiety[17] [inspiring] him to whitewash himself affects him. He presents the war as it unfolds.

Generally speaking, we see the war at each point as it could be seen by the contemporaries at the time, and so a detailed description of battles lets you see what happens within the battle for Syracuse. The battle as it was up to this point—no suggestion of what came afterward should decrease your interest or empathy with the situation as it was at that very moment. Thucydides actually follows the war; but war is, as Thucydides says, a violent teacher. But a violent teacher, I would say, not only for anyone except Thucydides, but also and especially for Thucydides himself. War is a teacher, you recall, however, not only in violence but also about violence, and therewith about the truth of which violence forms a part.

Thucydides was not unprepared for the war and its message. He says at the beginning that when the war broke out he expected it to be a very great and memorable war. But there is the difference between expectation and knowing. That it was the greatest and most devastating war he knew, of course, only at a much later date. But Thucydides was not unprepared for the war and its lessons. However, this does not mean that there were not numerous and important lessons for him to learn. By presenting the war and only the war, he could not help presenting the process of his own most advanced education—the things that he did not know prior to the war—and by presenting himself in the process of his most advanced education, he presents himself at his highest point, namely, Thucydides the Athenian.

Many critics have found it a fault that Thucydides has not spoken of the intellectual and artistic life of Athens in his time—you know, the glory of the Periclean Age. He does not say a word about it. But I think he is very wise. You know when you dip into these general political histories, the obligatory chapter on the intellectual life of the time which novelists wrote then and other things, they are generally below the level of the true political narrative because these things cannot be narrated. You can narrate only external effects; you cannot present the intellectual and spiritual life of men. Thucydides does much better by writing his book on the highest level of what was possible intellectually in the Periclean Age. If you read his book you see the Periclean Age and its intellectual glory; you do not have to have some shallow statement about certain tragedies of Sophocles and certain comedies of Aristophanes. That is much too remote. Thucydides

presents himself without any vanity. He needs to do it in order to show the war; he has to show what he was taught by the war.

Now certain difficulties which I have not discussed and which will come up from time to time were caused by the assumption that Thucydides was an historian. I believe it is prudent to drop this assumption. We must go back behind the traditional distinction between history and philosophy. This distinction as we know it stems from Aristotle. Whether it existed in Thucydides's mind we do not know. It is much better to use a nonprejudicial term like "wisdom" or[18] [*sōphrosynē*].[xv] Thucydides narrated the Peloponnesian War not merely because he had an opportunity to observe this particular war, because he happened to live at the time, but—and this is very clear from the beginning—because the Peloponnesian War was a singularly memorable war. Why? It was in the first place the most memorable Greek war, and Thucydides shows this in his introduction by comparing the Peloponnesian War to the [only] two[19] other wars which could be regarded as comparable in greatness and misery to the Peloponnesian War: the Trojan War and the Persian War. The Trojan War for the simple reason that it had been magnified by Homer, and that had to be faced. He narrated the most memorable Greek war, which took in eventually all Greeks of the homeland or of the islands and which even affected, so to speak—as Thucydides says with considerable conscious exaggeration—the largest part of mankind. The Chinese and Hindus will be quite surprised to hear that, but Thucydides, I think, did it with his eyes open. The Peloponnesian War was for him the first, so to speak, universal war, not only the most memorable Greek war.

Now he proves this assertion in the long introduction, the so-called Archaeology. Thucydides says as follows: the most famous Greek war, and the most famous universal war, was the Trojan War, but such is the power of poetry. And Thucydides is so sure that the reputation of the Trojan War is unfounded, and that of the Persian War. The principle to which Thucydides refers is the weakness of the ancients. The weakness of the ancients. In the olden times, and the olden times extend until the Persian Wars inclusively—do you have a notion of the dates? I hear the young generation of this country doesn't learn any dates anymore. When he wrote was roughly fifty years after the end of the Persian Wars. The weakness of the ancients: the ancients had no power, especially and particularly no naval power. No navy, no trade. And then he describes the slow rise of strength through the ages, a rise which created the power and the wealth of Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. That was the peak: 431.

But the rise of power and wealth from original weakness and poverty was also the rise from original universal barbarism to the clear distinction between barbarians, barbarism and what we may call Greekness. Thucydides makes this point that at the time of the[20] [Trojan] War there were not yet Greeks. The name Greek, Hellenes, was applied only to a very small part; and at one point he even says that not only were there no men called Greeks, there were no Greeks. The characteristics of the Greeks, what I will call tentatively Greekness, arose very slowly later. Now the war which affects powerfully all Greeks and a considerable part of the barbarians affects the only two parts of the human

[xv] Greek for prudence or moderation, ambiguously a moral virtue and an intellectual one.

race: Greeks and barbarians, and that may be not improperly called "universal." The human race—that is the implication of this archaeology—has two poles: barbarism and Greekness. And to be extremely sweeping, it doesn't make any difference: the highest civilizations of Persia and Egypt and the savages which lived in northern Greece and were barbarian in every sense. Not that Thucydides did not know the difference, but he wished to let us see a fundamental problem. The human race has two poles: barbarians and Greekness. And Greekness in its turn has also two poles: Sparta and Athens.

Sparta and Athens were the two poles of Greekness and were at their highest point in regard to war when the war broke out. For any people to be at their highest point in regard to war presupposes that they must have lived for a very long time in peace, or, at any rate, undisturbed by big wars. The highest point in regard to war presupposes the highest point in regard to peace. If we assume then that war and peace, barbarism and Greekness, Sparta and Athens, are the fundamental opposites—and that is what Thucydides suggests in his Archaeology—we may say that the Peloponnesian War is the climactic war which reveals these opposites at their highest point, and therefore it reveals the full human truth. All human possibilities are exhausted. That does not mean that there will not come other things: there will come a decay, God knows what kind of changes, and there will be something like Athens or Sparta, perhaps, but the fundamental possibilities are exhausted.

Now it is in this way, it seems to me, that the singular and the universal are interwoven in Thucydides's work. He describes only this war between these two cities, Sparta and Athens, 431 to 404, and in telling this story he[21] [tells] the whole story of man. Well, there is considerable cursoriness and elusiveness regarding the private life of man, but the political life contains, in a way, the private life within itself. This is, I believe, the way in which Thucydides wrote his history. Before I enter into detailed discussion of the Archaeology, I would like to find out whether I have made myself understood.

Student: Is there room now to raise the question about certain other historians who take up Thucydides's account, say, of Pericles or of other characters, and find differing aspects between his own account of these characters—not the speeches of the characters, but the actions of the characters—such as Plutarch?

LS: One must not approach this question from the point of view of our present or nineteenth-century organized historical research. These historians who are so famous were not professors of this history. They were all living in a kind of isolation—Plutarch in a small Greek town—when they wrote these things. And you first have to find out why did Plutarch write these parallel lives. He did not do it in order to present the past for its own sake, to dig it up, whatever the intentions of the present-day scientific historians. The same question arises there, you know. I surely don't think that Plutarch or any other historian I know of has this intention, to reveal the most important human truth in the form of a history of one war. Surely Herodotus has such a broad concern, but in Herodotus the Persian War is only the last third or so of a history which describes what they now would call all the civilizations of the East: Egypt, Persia, and so on and so on. This severity and austerity of Thucydides is unequalled, unrivaled, and it is so easy to

read him only from the point of view of someone who wanted to get the facts straight about the Peloponnesian War as such and nothing else. I have no doubt that he took this very seriously, and that whenever he makes an assertion regarding a skirmish which had no particular importance, then perhaps he was not correct, but certainly it was an honest error. He made the greatest effort to set down things as they happened. But behind that there was a notion to understand war, but you cannot understand war without understanding peace. And what is human life except war and peace? Is it an accident that the greatest novel of modern times is entitled *War and Peace*? Granted that Tolstoy developed very much the peace side with all kinds of details, but his fundamental notion was the same.

Same Student: Then you would reject the suggestion that in finding certain disparities one could make a case for a purposeful falsification on the part of Thucydides?

LS: Well, in the first place, I am not an ancient historian, and when reading the commentary by ancient historians I tremble about the difficulties which they have. The dating, the chronology alone, is absolutely terrific. And surely, if you have to have the history of Greece and of the Peloponnesian War, you have to do your best, and Thucydides is the most important, by far the most important, source—although they have now a mass of inscriptions which partly confirm, partly contradict what Thucydides says. I have no judgment on these matters. I try simply to see—the inscriptions don't tell us such a story. I would say that what we must try to understand is the relations[hip] of that account which Thucydides gives to Plato's and Aristotle's account, and that is a manageable problem. For example, in the third and fourth books of Plato's *Laws* you have a kind of history of Greece which is very interesting to compare with Thucydides's. What Plato and Aristotle have in mind can find an expression in the form of a historical presentation. Plato would call this a myth because it cannot have the perspicuity of a philosophic account, but it can take on this form.

Student: [. . .]

LS: If you understand it broadly enough, does it not make sense? By understanding the Greek cities at the time of the Peloponnesian War—what is going on in the cities and between the cities, the essential character of these things—if you understood it, does this not throw light on every other situation between "cities," i.e., between independent political societies? It is very easy to see an analogon in the problem involved in the Corcyraeans' coming to Athens in our own times. Thucydides did not mean that one could literally imitate any recipes which might come out of the Peloponnesian War, but we understand the standard powers which affect cities, men living in cities and being members of cities.

Same Student: Is it fair to draw the conclusion from your statement that a certain kind of response from political upheavals—what kind of response could be expected?

LS: Please give an example of what you mean.

Same Student: In the middle of the book there is a passage in which he describes a certain kind of response of human nature to political revolution—man doesn't care much about his morality.

LS: The description in the third book of what happens [. . .] I don't think there is any description anywhere in the world about what happens in such a situation of civil war in any society comparable to that. You see, sometimes people say—I have read articles by present-day political scientists who believe that Thucydides supplies us with hypotheses about politics which we can still test. I remember one man—somewhere a character says that men are induced to their actions by the profitable, by fear, and by honor or prestige. I don't think you have to do much testing of that to know that it is true. There is a certain kind of thing which Thucydides did not do because it is trivial. We will come to some examples where we can see more clearly what this is.

Student: You were speaking before about speeches and deeds, words and actions. In regard to the speeches, doesn't Thucydides have in mind the actions which follow a speech made by the person who makes the speech, or does he also have in mind speeches which exhort others to action?

LS: For example, Pericles makes a speech and suggests war, and the Athenian assembly agrees with him. The action is not simply the action of Pericles; it is the action of Athens.

Same Student: Sometimes a speech is misinterpreted by those who perform the actions, is it not?

LS: What does this mean? This is too general. In the first speech, the Corcyraeans come to Athens and want to have an alliance with them. And the Corinthians say: Don't make an alliance with them. The Athenians are compelled to do one or the other, either make an alliance with them or refrain from making an alliance. After some hesitation, they make the alliance. There is nothing fishy or strange about it. The fishy element comes in in the reasoning given [about] why they should make an alliance. One argument is, of course, the question of who is right: which of the two opponents' cause is the just cause? There is one consideration displayed at[22] great length. And then there is also another consideration[23], that the Corcyraeans have the second greatest navy. And if the second greatest navy is added to the Athenian navy, then the Athenian navy controls the sea. And this, as you can easily see, is wholly independent of whether the Corcyraeans are just or unjust men. And you can[not] easily figure out whether the Athenians were swayed by the justice of the cause of the Corcyraeans or by the navy of the Corcyraeans. This is the ambiguity. It is relatively simple, is it not? You have to enter into the details, general discussion is of no great use. One must not anticipate this before we come to the specific examples.

Student: [. . .]

LS: I am not concerned with the question, which is of great concern to many philologists and historians, whether we can find out which part of this history Thucydides wrote

when. Well, take a simple example: the war started in 431. No one could know how long it would last, but after ten years there was peace. Did Thucydides know in 421 that the war would be taken up again a few years later, so that the whole war would last twenty-seven years? Of course he didn't know that. For example, they say we can find out which parts Thucydides wrote when he believed the war was over in 421, and which parts he wrote when he knew that this had been a delusion. I don't believe that one can know that in the case of any great writer, and I am not interested in that. But I will say that if Thucydides says generally that war is a violent teacher, I assume that he knew it also from his own experience, that he learned some things from the war which he did not know before.

There is this remark which we read, by the way, in chapter[24] [21], where he says in peacetime people are given to admire the ancient things. Hobbes didn't translate that correctly, not "the ancient war." We don't understand the meaning of what he says immediately, because we are brought up to believe in progress. But in former ages and in other cultures it was more common that people admired the past. Even in this country you can still understand it from such an expression as the "Founding Fathers." No one is spoken of as highly in serious speech as the "Founding Fathers." Whatever may be said at a given moment in the newspapers, no present president has the reputation of the Founding Fathers. That is an inkling of what was much more common in former ages. Thucydides does not agree with this admiration for the past. In a way, he believes in progress. But in war, he says,[25] [people] forget. In war people believe that the present war is the biggest war, because they suffer from it and present ills and suffering are much more impressive than the remembrance of them. Now look at these two points. The peacetime[26] [thesis, that] the ancient times were the grandest times, is simply wrong according to Thucydides. But the wartime thesis, [that] the present war is the biggest war, is not always wrong. In our particular case, in the case of the Peloponnesian War, it is even true. If we generalize from this, from this particular example, we see that war has an element of truth which peace lacks. War brings up things which are concealed in peacetime. You know [. . .] a certain deeper stratum emerges, a terrible stratum comes to light. Perhaps Thucydides understood this better after ten or twenty years of war than before.

Student: Wasn't it a basic Greek maxim that it was only in the exercise of power that you could see a man?

LS: But power, this was something different. Power means the exercise of his office, of his magistracy. For example, our judgment of that individual, John F. Kennedy, will be more substantiated after he has been president than when he was running for[27] president. Is that not true?

Same Student: Wouldn't you think, for example, that the Greeks would apply that same maxim to the performance of the Athenians at Melos, that we see the Athenians for what they are when they have the Melians finally walled in?

LS: I see, all right. But why should not[28] the Athenian actions in peacetime also reveal the Athenians?

Same Student: This is quite true. But the point is that the implication of the Greek maxim is that your observations on the man are of no value until he is in a position to determine the outcome of the situation in which he finds himself.

LS: Yes, but I don't see that this necessarily means warlike action. We are now concerned with the question of whether in a certain sense war does not reveal [a] fundamental truth which is concealed in peacetime, and this remark of Thucydides seems to suggest it. Perhaps I should say a few words about Thucydides's Archaeology. Let us read the beginning. Do you have it?

Reader:
Thucydides of Athens has narrated the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians; how they waged war against one another, he having begun immediately at its beginning to write it, having come to expect that it would be a great war and the most memorable of the early ones. And he inferred this from the fact that they both—the Athenians and the Peloponnesians—were at their highest point in regard to war in their whole equipment. And also that the other Hellenes were coming to the side of each, part of them immediately, and others were already contemplating it. For this was the greatest motion, movement, for the Greeks and for part of the barbarians and so to speak for the majority of human beings.[xvi]

LS: Now this is a key word that occurs again and again. War is here subsumed under something more general, and that is called motion, movement, disturbance, I will call it. Let us use the most general translation: motion. And the opposite of motion is of course rest, and this opposition of motion and rest goes through the whole Archaeology. And the picture which Thucydides gives to us is that at the beginning there was universal motion, universal unrest, nothing settled. Importunity, fear, poverty, no cities proper, no trade. It is something which reminds somehow of Hobbes's famous state of nature. Of course it is not called a state of nature. Now this is the original state, the beginning state, and there come places and times where there is rest, and in these rest periods there takes place an accumulation of strength, wealth, increased daring. But then there is something else which is in a way much more important—although, needless to say, the accumulation of power and wealth is very important—and that is that at the origin there was universal barbarism. No distinction between Greeks and barbarians, and that means not merely no distinction between Greek-speaking and non-Greek-speaking peoples; it means that the way of life was not yet distinct. Piracy, robbery—all civilized life was remote. In the sixth chapter he says that ancient Greeks lived in all respects like the present barbarians, i.e., they were barbarians.

Then there is a first epoch which is clearly recognizable, and that is indicated by a name, by the name which those of you who have read Plato will know very well: Minos, the

[xvi] Thucydides 1.1.

king of Crete, according to tradition the son of Zeus. Thucydides would not mention such things. Minos: he destroyed piracy, he put down the evildoers, namely, the pirates. That is the beginning of the sphere of civilization. Now if we take into consideration the relation of piracy and robbery and so on to justice and right we see that what developed there slowly was right.

Then he says the second great epoch was the Trojan War, and a name is mentioned: Agamemnon, and that means Sparta.[xvii] We have this theorem which it is easy to know from Plato and Aristotle, Crete and Sparta as the oldest and most venerable part of Greece, which comes up in Thucydides [in] exactly the same way. Agamemnon's grandfather came from Asia. He was also a barbarian. And Thucydides mentions in passing that if the Greeks helped Agamemnon conquer Troy, they did not do this out of human kindness, out of gratitude or something of this kind, but out of fear. The whole story, superficially read, is the story of debunking. These were very poor and barbaric men, these older men. All civilized life is of relatively recent origin. In other words, in the olden times there was not gracefulness, friendliness, as well as gratitude. Higher things come later. What Thucydides suggests on the surface, and very powerfully, is this connection: war, unrest or motion, poverty, injustice; and on the other hand, peace, rest, wealth, and right. In this whole Archaeology there is no reference to a vitally important point which comes up in our next reading, and that is art or science. Later on he speaks of the naval war, where he says that in this battle they still fought in the old-fashioned manner with courage and bodily strength, but without art.[xviii] And at a certain later naval battle there was already the art of naval warfare.

This, however, is a very old story and this we must keep in mind. But when a certain suggestion occurs, for example in chapters 15 and 16, in which we see another picture, it is true, we must say, that war is generally bad for power and wealth and greatness,[29] [but] everyone knows that Greece's power rose very much through the Persian Wars. There is also the fact that war—or unrest, motion—leads to wealth, and that peace, rest, stagnation keeps people in poverty. Thucydides has built up the arc in the following way: there is at first a history from the beginnings to about the period of the Persian War. This is roughly chapters 1 to 19. And then there comes something like an insertion, in which [we find] the passage which we partly read about how he wrote his book and how he wrote the speeches and the deeds: chapters 20 to 22. And then he has one chapter which reads like an appendix in which he disposes in a few lines of the thought that the Persian Wars could conceivably [have] be[en] as great a war as the Peloponnesian War. And then one could argue as follows: Thucydides had to prove, of course, that the Peloponnesian War was the greatest war, but among all enlightened people the greatest war was of course the Persian War. And why not simply make a comparison between the Persian War [and the Peloponnesian War] and settle the issue? But Thucydides had a much broader thing in mind. Now in this last chapter, chapter[30] [23], in which he proves the superiority of the Peloponnesian War to the Persian War, he speaks exclusively of the destructive effect of

[xvii] In fact, Homer presents Agamemnon as the king not of Sparta but of Argos; it is his younger brother Menelaus who reigns at Sparta.

[xviii] The reference is to the naval battle between the Corinthians and the Corcyraeans related at 1.49.

the Persian War. Not a word about its patriotic liberating effect. He proves that the Peloponnesian War was a much greater war than the Persian because the Peloponnesian War was a much more destructive war. The Persian War: two naval battles and two land battles and everything was over. That's not a big war. I think what Thucydides means is this, he wanted to end the Archaeology with this overall theme: war—unrest, motion—is destructive;[31] peace, rest, and so on are the opposite. This is the overall theme, but within that theme there is an allowance made for the other side, namely, that war, unrest, and therefore injustice may lead to power and wealth. Let us read the beginning of chapter 18.

Reader:
But after that the tyrants, both of Athens and of the rest of Greece where tyrannies were, were the most and last of them, excepting those of Sicily, put down by the Lacedaemonians (for Lacedaemon, after that it was built by the Dorians that inhabited the same, though it hath been longer troubled with seditions than any other city we know, yet hath it had for the longest time good laws, and been also always free from tyrants; for it is unto the end of this war four hundred years and something more that the Lacedaemonians have used one and the same government, and thereby being of power themselves, they also ordered the affairs in the other cities); I say, after the dissolution of tyrannies in Greece, it was not long before the battle was fought by the Medes against the Athenians in the fields of Marathon. And in the tenth year again after that came the barbarian with the great fleet into Greece to subdue it. And Greece being now in great danger, the leading of the Grecians that leagued in that war was given to the Lacedaemonians—[xix]

LS: That is, Sparta. For a very long period, no change; and the two great vices of government, tyranny and chaos, absent. They were a very old fashioned or, as some people might say, a very conservative power. That will become clear shortly. There is another point regarding Sparta which we should read, in chapter 6. At an earlier stage there is another theme present here.

Reader:
For once they were wont throughout all Greece to go armed because their houses were unfenced and traveling was unsafe, and accustomed themselves, like the barbarians, to the ordinary wearing of armor. And the nations of Greece that live so yet, do testify that the same manner of life was anciently universal to all the rest. Amongst whom the Athenians were the first that laid by their armor and growing civil, passed into a more tender— [xx]

LS: Even "luxurious."

Reader:
kind of life. And such of the rich as were anything stepped into years laid away upon the same delicacy, not long after, the fashion of wearing linen

[xix] Thucydides 1.18.
[xx] Thucydides 1.6.

> coats and golden grasshoppers, which they were wont to bind up in the locks of their hair. From whence also the same fashion, by reason of their affinity, remained a long time in use amongst the ancient Ionians. But the moderate kind of garment, and conformable to the wearing of these times, was first taken up by the Lacedaemonians, amongst whom also, both in other things and especially in the culture of their bodies, the nobility observed the most equality with the commons.

LS: The truly civilized city, which is however not luxury or display but moderate: Sparta. Sparta discovered the civilized life first and retained it longest. Now this praise of Sparta, which was the leading power against Persia, as he emphasizes, is part of the praise of right or justice. And he has a depreciation of tyrants, and especially as Sparta is something old. And then we see a remarkable tension between the Archaeology and the overall theme. The overall theme is the weak praise of the ancients, and that means a rejection of the equation that the good is the old. The good is the old: that, we can say, is the principle of traditionalism as such, and the Archaeology is a critique of traditionalism with the use of the traditional materials which stem from all Hellenic places. That is of no particular interest to Thucydides. But then on the other side, you get also the pro-Spartan utterances; they are the other pole. Not the oldest—that was savage—but something rather old, a few centuries old, and not the most novel—that is the best.

Now this of course will have to be qualified considerably on the basis of the things which we will see later. I would, however, make one more remark. This whole Archaeology has two overall themes. The first is surely the weakness of the ancients and also the qualification of that. But equally important is a point which is only subservient to that, although nevertheless no less important: the weakness of the thought of the ancients. I mean, not only were the ancients weaker in power and wealth and in naval strength and so on and so on, but [even] their thought was[32] inferior, and the symbol of that is Homer's magnifying of the Trojan War. This is the ancient thought.[33] The funeral speech [of Pericles later] begins in the same way in which Thucydides himself begins, [and] there is a very deceptive similarity: an ascent from a very low stage of power and wealth to a peak in two or three generations, say, after the Persian War. That's the way in which Thucydides begins. That's the way in which Pericles begins, but we will have to also see what the difference is. That I thought I should mention.

These statements about the[34] [. . .] and about the way of life of the Athenians and Spartans are the only two binding reflections, one can say, which occur in the Archaeology; but later on, in chapter[35] [23], the question of right and wrong comes to the fore. Does anyone here wish to say anything?

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, that was a sacrifice.[36] They were not the Spartans proper. This series, Sparta and Athens, is crucial to the whole book, as much as is today the United States and Soviet Russia. [. . .] Everyone who speaks about Sparta or Athens, be it Pericles or the enemies of Athens, has to take this up. And it is very difficult to see where is Thucydides

precisely on these matters. I do not believe he simply identifies himself with Pericles, but we must see. Is there any other point?

Session 2: January 8, 1962
Book 1, Chapters 24-88

Leo Strauss: Sir, you undertook too much.[i] These sixty-four or sixty-five chapters would require the utmost attention, and you went through the whole work. That is very difficult. You made some points regarding your assignment which are all right, but I wish you had concentrated ruthlessly on your assignment. There is another point which you of course did not take into consideration,[1] which I have to take into consideration. You assumed—rightly in the sense of law, but not in the sense of fact—that everyone had read these sixty-five chapters. Now I, being an old hand, know that many students read only their assignment, and therefore when you speak of Corcyra and Epidamnus and Corinth, how can you be sure that your allusions will be understood?[ii]

Now then let us return to a coherent discussion, and I bring up a point that I mentioned last time regarding the purpose of the whole work. We turn to Thucydides in the expectation[2] [of] learn[ing] something from him about political things, something which we are not likely to learn from Plato and Aristotle. Now what is that? In Plato's *Timaeus*, which is the sequel to the *Republic* and which opens with a kind of summary of the *Republic*, and which is said to take place on the day after Socrates has told the conversation of the *Republic*—not on [the day on] which[3] [that earlier] conversation[4] takes place—and now Socrates says: "In the next place, listen to my feelings about the polity which we have described. I would compare my feelings to something of this kind: suppose on seeing beautiful things, either works of art or actually alive, but in repose, a man should be moved by the desire to see them in motion and rigorously engage in some such exercise which seems suitable to their physique. This is the very feeling I have regarding the city we have described."[iii] In the *Republic*, they have described the city in[5] [repose], and now Socrates would like to see it in motion. And as he makes clear in the sequel, a city in motion means a city engaged in work. This is not given in the *Republic*, and it surely is not given in Aristotle's *Politics*, and it is literally the same term which Thucydides uses: the war which he describes is the greatest "motion," "change," "disturbance." This is what Thucydides does and what Socrates himself regards as a desideratum after one has read the *Republic* or, for that matter, the *Laws*. And we must see later on whether it is possible to integrate the understanding of the city in motion[6] [with] the understanding of the city at rest, which Plato had described.

Now one general word about the way in which we plan to study Thucydides. The general character of Thucydidean studies since the nineteenth century has been "historical." That means two things. In the first place, people are trying to understand Thucydides's work as the work of a Greek, an Athenian of the classical period; and secondly, they have tried to

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] Strauss's remarks are puzzling, since it appears that the sixty-five chapters that the student had discussed in his paper had all been assigned to the students for this particular session.
[iii] *Timaeus* 19b-c.

understand the work in the light of the genesis of the work. For example, the work seems to be unfinished; there are all kinds of traces that the work underwent various stages, and so on. I do not think that this kind of approach is adequate for the following reasons. Thucydides said, and our reader quoted, that he regarded his work as a possession for ever. For ever. And it could be such a possession for ever because it was based on an understanding of human nature. Thucydides claims that he has transcended the particular, the Athenian or the Greek. Yet this transcending does not mean destroying the particular. On the contrary, Thucydides regards himself as responsible for the[7] [. . .][iv] of the *polis* of Athens, and this causes a certain reticence on his part, of which we find many traces. In brief, I think that it is this political posture of Thucydides which explains the contradictions and other irregularities of the work, which are not merely unintended traces of his development or of his workshop but very conscious and intended features of the work. I state this now only in the vaguest generality.

Now before turning to our subject for today, we have to consider the character of the paragraph preceding the beginning of today's assignment, paragraph 23. After having concluded a survey of what has happened from the beginning to the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, he says the Athenians began it, and the Peloponnesians—

Reader:
All these evils entered together with this war, which began from the time that the Athenians and Peloponnesians brake the league which immediately after the conquest of Euboea had been concluded between them for thirty years. The causes why they brake the same and their quarrels I have therefore set down first, because no man should be to seek from what ground so great a war amongst the Grecians could arise. And the truest quarrel, though least in speech, I conceive to be the growth of the Athenian power, which putting the Lacedaemonians into fear necessitated the war. But the causes of the breach of the league publicly voiced were these.

LS: He makes a distinction here between the truest allegation,[8] but that which is also the most invisible in speech—i.e., that which is not confessed . . . And[9] complaints which are [just] left[10] in the open, and they are different. And Thucydides speaks first of the open allegations, that which was openly said as distinguished from the truest but invisible causes. And the book is split up in this way, that in the next sixty-four chapters up to 88 he speaks of the open complaints, the open causes, the alleged causes, and in chapter 89 and following he speaks of the invisible but truest causes. And this leads to the strange consequence that Thucydides speaks first in chapter 24 and following of the later events, and then in chapter 89 and following of the earlier events.

We cannot carry this question before next time, but it is very roughly this: the first part, just up to chapter 23, goes from the origins to 431; it gives a survey of the whole [of] history until 431, the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Then the second, which we are discussing today,[11] can be arranged roughly from 435 to 432; and the third, which is

[iv] The transcript has "possibility," which is likely to be an error.

chapter[s] 89 to 118 roughly, deals with the period from 479 to 435. We cannot now understand this; I state it now as a problem.

And now we come to the first issue. Beginning: "There is a city called Epidamnus." That is the way it begins, like a first-rate novel.[12] Epidamnus is now[13] [Durazzo][v] in Albania. [LS goes to the map and points out the various places mentioned in the text.][vi] Now what is the situation? I mean only the main points. Epidamnus is in trouble. Epidamnus had been colonized by Corcyra, and Corcyra[14] itself was a colony of Corinth. The people of Epidamnus are in trouble—the reasons are not important or emphasized by Thucydides—and they try to get help from their mother city, from Corcyra. And the Corcyreans say: No, we are not interested in helping you, our children. And then the people of Epidamnus go to the grandmother, to Corinth, who was not really the grandmother[vii] but who was very directly related to Epidamnus because she had had a hand in the colonization.[15] As a matter of fact,[16] [before] they go to Corinth and the Corinthians,[17] they go to the oracle in Delphi, and the oracle in Delphi tells them: Go to your grandmother, go to Corinth. That is crucially important. The highest authority is on the side of—actually, the Corinthians behave decently; they say: Yes, we'll do that. But then the abominable people of Corcyra say: No, no, no, we don't want you up here in our neighborhood, and start a war. And these colonials from Corcyra had a very good navy and it seems as though they licked the Corinthians. But then the Corinthians get angry about this insolent behavior of their children and now begin to rearm, and they want to show them that they cannot behave in this manner to mother, the metropolis of Corinth. And then the Corcyraeans get frightened, and what do they do? They come to Athens and ask Athens for help. And this is the critical situation.

It is quite clear according to the presentation of Thucydides, regardless of whether the actual situation was more complicated—that is uninteresting, because we have here only Thucydides. The Corcyraeans are clearly nasty people, according to this presentation. The Corinthians make a much better impression. And the Athenians are confronted [with the question]: What should they do? Should they accept the advice, which amounted to a command, of the Delphian oracle, according to which Corinth would save Epidamnus and let it go on, or should they do something else? And here is the point. The first two speeches which occur in the book are the speeches of the Corcyraeans and of the Corinthians in Athens, the Corcyraeans demanding an alliance with Athens and the Corinthians advising against the alliance. The Corcyraeans have to do all kinds of things: they have to explain why they never tried to become an ally of Athens at other times when they didn't need Athens so badly. And of course they apologize for their lack of intelligence and say that "it had nothing to do with wickedness on our part that we didn't

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[v] Albanian *Durrës*; my conjecture is that Strauss would have used the Italian name by which the city was known to Western Europeans of his generation.

[vi] As noted by the transcriber.

[vii] Corinth was the grandmother in the sense that it was the *metropolis* or mother city of Corcyra. It was usual when a city like Corcyra that was itself a colony founded a colony to invite its mother city to participate in the new founding. The new colony would then pay ritual honors to both cities as its founders. These practices notwithstanding, a colony was from the outset a *polis* in its own right and therefore politically independent of its mother city.

want to help other people, it was just plain stupidity. We thought we shouldn't bother other people, you know," and things like that. And then they make quite clear that there is something more to that, and[18] [it] is very simple: "We have one of the strongest navies in Greece." Let's say the third strongest; the strongest are the Athenian and the Corinthian [navies]. "And now, if the Corinthians defeat us, our navy will become Corinthian, and then the Corinthian navy will be stronger than the Athenian navy." And since the Athenian army is surely inferior to the army of Athens' enemy, [Sparta], Athens is licked from the very beginning.

Well, one crude fact I must mention in case you don't know [it]: that of the overall alignment. There were two confederations: the Athenian confederation, based on Athens' naval power chiefly in the islands and and also places in the north and on the coast of Asia Minor; and on the other hand the Peloponnesian alliance, [a] land power. So this was the problem: What should you do, shall you ally yourself with crooks, because that is the only way that you can avoid defeat and ruin? It is a very interesting question. Think—to take an almost impossible example—that in five years Red China would come and say that they want an alliance with this country against Soviet Russia. Should one throw them out? Or should one be sensible? Interesting, isn't it? Now it is linked up with another important issue, and that makes it really wonderful. The whole argument of the Corcyraeans is based on the premise that there will be a war, a Peloponnesian war. But if there may not be a war, the situation is different. Why should one abandon one's high principles for no good use? That is surely unreasonable. Even more subtly than that, how do you know that this alliance with the crooks, with Corcyra, will not bring about that very war for the sake of which you allegedly make the alliance? Is it not interesting? And is it not absolutely plausible to say that if Athens had not made that alliance with Corcyra there would have been no Peloponnesian War? How can you know? That is, I think, the issue, brought out beautifully. But Thucydides does not state the issue in this form; he only presents it, gives you the data. And that is the question.

Now in other words, one could say, and surely there were Athenians who said exactly that: If you make this alliance with Corcyra you bring about the war; hence, reject the alliance. Very good, but to which the other party could very well reply: Your policy of rejecting the alliance is also based on a supposition, namely, that the peace party in Sparta is strong. How do you know that? There is a peace party and a war party in Athens, there is a peace party and a war party in Sparta. Now how can you measure them? Well, some of our present-day social-science colleagues would probably say: Well, polls. But that requires, among other things, that polls are permitted, and secondly that people are willing to give the answers, which will not hold good in a critical situation. And even should they be willing to do so, we cannot be sure that they will in fact, however.

Now what is the point, what is behind this? Behind this is a theme which goes through the whole book: the essential uncertainty regarding political matters, which cannot be overcome by any technique either of social science or of institutions. And what is the root of this essential uncertainty of political things? One can say the radical difference of interest of beings which can outwit one another, and therefore conceal things from one

another. Nothing can be done about that. The fact that you can know with certainty absolute limits beyond which no one can go—well, such crude limits as "All men are mortal," for example: of course we know that Khrushchev is mortal, and that if Khrushchev died there would be quite a problem in Soviet Russia, perhaps bigger than that which it had after the death of Stalin, which will affect foreign relations considerably. But it is important to know when he will die, and who can know that?[viii]

But let us assume the Peloponnesian War could have been avoided—in other words, that the calculation of the peace parties in both places was correct. Then Pericles's policy, which was based on the principle that war was inevitable, was unwise. But we must think that through. What would be the ultimate consequence of this kind of thing? I mean, what is the ultimate premise of every peace party? The ultimate premise? Well, that war is bad, that war is destructive, surely. "No wars at all." This also has certain typical difficulties, for example: "From now on no wars"; that is to say that the present situation is frozen. There are lots of injustices which have been committed and which enter into the present situation, but these issues must not be opened any more; it must be frozen. Goa is a typical example in our time. I mean, if there is to be no longer any violent change, India committed a real crime by entering Goa.[ix] And besides that one could also give other examples. And that, by the way, is the reason why this Oder–Neisse business is so crucially important, because that was never recognized.[x] Goa was recognized; this was never recognized. So there must be a sort of amnesty: all injustices which have not been remedied hitherto can no longer be remedied—at least by war.[19] [This] is also a very great difficulty. We must see later on whether this comes up in any other way.

Now let us see a few special points. What I believe to be of crucial importance for the understanding of the history as a whole is this: that the Corcyraean affair, with which the whole account of Thucydides starts, the detailed account of it starts—this start is really a clean slate. I mean, the rights or wrongs of Epidamnus are not discussed; what is discussed is only after the Epidamnians go to Corinth, and they do that on the basis of the Delphian oracle. The Corinthians are perfectly entitled to accept this cry for help, and they are perfectly entitled therefore to defend the Epidamnians against the Corcyraeans. And then comes the key, the decisive thing: the Corcyraeans ask the Athenians for an alliance. Here a decision is made where the issue of right comes up, but we start from a clean slate. I think that is a key point, it is the best presentation.

Student: In every other action, whatever action is taken, the fear of what would happen if you don't take the action stands out very clearly. But in the Corcyraeans' affair, Thucydides makes no mention of the fear of the Corcyraeans if the Corinthians should be

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[viii] As if to confirm Strauss's point of the fundamental unpredictability of political things, Khrushchev's rule was to end in a manner unpredicted by Strauss: in October 1964 he was ousted by his colleagues on the Praesidium of the Communist Party.

[ix] Strauss refers to India's forcible annexation of the Portuguese enclaves of Goa, Daman, and Diu in December 1961.

[x] Strauss refers to the Oder–Neisse line, that is, the border between Germany and Poland as agreed upon by the allied powers at the Potsdam Conference of 1945. West Germany did not officially recognize this border until 1970.

in an alliance. It seems to be an almost arbitrary action taken by the Corcyraeans without consideration of the results if the Corinthians were actually there.

LS: It is very easy to figure out why the Corcyraeans did not like to have the Corinthians in their neighborhood. That is easy to figure out. What Thucydides, I think, wants to do is present the situation, as I call it, of a clean slate—which, you know, never exists in fact, because there was already a civil war in Epidamnus [20]between the democrats and the oligarchs. And the question would have to be raised: Were the Epidamnians not nasty people that they threw out the wealthy men? And all the wealthy men then allied themselves with the savages of the neighborhood, attacking their home town: were they not nasty? All these questions could naturally be raised, but Thucydides presented it in such a way that we cannot raise these questions. He wants to present a simple issue and say: *Even if* you could ever start from a clean slate, you will come up against this kind of a question that we have here: Should Athens, out of fear of a possible war, make an alliance with Corcyra and therefore get into trouble with Corinth? And that comes out very clearly later when the Athenians have made—the Athenians of course don't make a hundred-percent alliance; they make only a defensive alliance: they are going to defend Corcyra if the Corinthians come up, not more. But the Corinthians do come, and the Athenians are standing by just in case. They don't fight; they are just standing by. But at a certain moment they have to fight. You see the line is very thinly drawn. This is like the kind of situations we have had—not to speak of Vietnam now, but the Spanish Civil War was a good example of this.

Now let me see. By the way, that is not unimportant, what happened in Athens. There is first the speech for the alliance by the Corcyraeans, who want to have it, and then against the alliance by the Corinthians. Then the Athenians first favor the Corinthians, but soon after they change their mind. There is no[21] [basis] that the Athenians give; it is only said that they change their mind, and it is perfectly possible to imagine that the decision was made by the direct intervention of Pericles himself.[xi] Thucydides does not say a word about this because the time has not yet come for bringing in Pericles himself. So the decision of the Athenians: No war against Corinth, but the defense of Corcyra against Corinth. That is, war against the Peloponnesians if the Corinthians insist on their war against Corcyra: If. And of course they do. The question is: Did the Corinthians wish the Peloponnesian War? Did they act against Corcyra merely because they were angry with the Corcyraeans, or was there a calculation behind it to bring about a situation where Sparta would have to come in sooner or later on their side?

The Corcyraean alliance merely means a considerable strengthening of Athens, and therewith a relative weakening of the Peloponnesian power. Now there is this naval battle between the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians in which the Athenians and the Corinthians come to blows "by necessity," as Thucydides calls it. Given the presence of the Athenian boats and the Corcyraeans [standing] in danger of being defeated, the Athenians have to do something. This naval battle is described in a way which deserves some attention,[22] because the points which we discussed in the introduction come up again. I think we'll just read the beginning of this, chapter 49.

[xi] As according to Plutarch it was: *Life of Pericles,* 29.

Reader:
The standard being on either side lift up, they joined battle, having on both parts both many men of arms and many archers and slingers, but after the old fashion as yet somewhat unskillfully appointed.[xii]

LS: "Old fashioned," after the old fashion.

Reader:
The battle was not so artificially as cruelly fought—

LS: The naval battle was tough, but not equally as regards art.[23]

Reader:
near unto the manner of a fight at land.

LS: "War like a land power." In other words, they fought like land soldiers just standing on—no operations of the boat.

Reader:
For after they had once run their galleys up close aboard one of another, they could not for the number and throng be easily gotten asunder again, but relied for the victory especially upon their men of arms who fought where they stood whilst the galleys remained altogether without motion.

LS: In other words the boats,[24] [*tōn neōn*], the boats remained at rest.[25] In a naval battle proper, it is precisely the motion of the boats which decides the issue.

Reader:
Passages through each other they made none but fought it out with courage and strength rather than with skill. Insomuch as the battle was in every part not without much tumult and disorder, in which the Athenian galleys being always, where the Corcyraeans—

LS: Now that we don't need any more. Now we have here a description of the difference between the old and new. The old: bodily strength, inanimate spirit. The new: art, science, understood in those days as mind. The old: chaotic, lots of noise, not like a modern battle would be: orderly. In a naval battle proper, which was a novel thing (that was not yet a naval battle proper), the boats do not rest.

I think we have to consider here this fundamental opposition between rest and motion which is sketched in the introduction. The progress is not only the movement from original unrest to rest—you know, unsettled conditions to settlement—but also the use of motion, the adaptation to motion, not to say the mastery of motion. What I suggest, and what we might keep in mind, is this:[26] [Might not] the difference between sea and land[27]

[xii] Thucydides 1.49.

be another of these fundamental opposites with which Thucydides is concerned? You know? Whereas I suppose the sea would come on the side of unrest, obviously, and the land would come on the side of rest. But I mention this only in passing.

A few more points. In chapter 53 we have the first exchange between Corinthians and Athenians. Hitherto we have not yet heard the Athenians. We have heard the Corcyraeans and we have heard the Corinthians. Now we hear the Athenians for the first time and, furthermore, whereas in the speeches Thucydides always says, "They said such like this"—that is a typical formula, he doesn't vouch for the literalness of the utterances—here we hear the Athenians and the Corinthians literally for the first time. It is of some interest to see that, in chapter 53. What do the Corinthians say?

Reader:
"Men of Athens, you do unjustly to begin the war and violate the articles; for whereas we go about to right us on our enemies, you stand in our way and bear arms against us; if therefore you be resolved to hinder our going against Corcyra or whatsoever place else we please, dissolve the peace, and laying hand[xiii] first upon us that are here, use us as enemies." Thus said they; and the Corcyraeans, as many of the army as heard them, cried out immediately to take and kill them. But the Athenians made answer thus: "Men of Peloponnesus, neither do we begin the war nor break the peace; but we bring aid to these our confederates, the Corcyraeans; if you please therefore to go any whither else, we hinder you not, but if against Corcyra, or any place belonging unto it, we will not suffer you."

LS: This is the situation, in case you have any doubt about [. . .] [LS goes to the map.] Here is Athens, and here is Corcyra. Corcyra is at war with Corinth, and Athens at peace with Corinth,[28] but here, what is going to happen? They must hedge, it is too delicate. This cannot last, this situation.

There is another naval battle in which both sides, the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians, claim to have won, on different grounds. In fact, one could say that the only victors were the Athenians, who, in spite of their engaging in battle with the Corinthians, preserve the peace and get what they want: revenge for the defeat of the Corcyraeans. But at the end of chapter 55, [Thucydides] makes clear [that] this was the first cause of the war of the Corinthians against the Athenians: that[29] [the Athenians] had fought in a naval battle with them during the peace on the side of the Corcyraeans.

Now what is the next event? That is the affair of Potidaea. Potidaea is in the north. [LS goes to the map.] This is also an interesting case. Potidaea was also a Corinthian colony, but an ally of Athens. And Potidaea did not wish to remain any more an ally of Athens, but according to the treaty Athens had the right to prevent the defection of Potidaea. Corinth, on the other hand, took this legal stand: that her right as the mother of Potidaea was more fundamental and[30] [overrode] the right which Athens had as an ally of Potidaea. Again, a somewhat complicated case, but the Athenians took the necessary

[xiii] The original text has "laying hands."

action, i.e., began a siege of Potidaea, aggravating the situation. There is already in fact a war between Athens and Corinth, but not yet between Athens and the Peloponnesian League; and in addition, there is not yet a declared war, you know, there is a kind of cold war, you could say. But Potidaea is in real danger of being conquered by Athens and therefore the Corinthians must act now, and they arrange that there be an assembly in Sparta, where the issue of war or peace against Athens is discussed. And here we have a series of speeches, four speeches about war and peace in Sparta, a very grand series.

The first is the speech of the Corinthians attacking the Athenians, then a speech by Athenians who happen to be present in Sparta who hear the terrible things said about Athens and present the case for Athens in the Spartan assembly. Then afterward there is the Spartan debate in the Spartan assembly, closed to foreigners, and there is first a speech in favor of peace by the leader of the peace party, the Spartan king[31] Archidamus, and then there is a speech by the leader of the Spartan war party—a very brief speech by an Ephor, Sthenelaidas—and then a decision is reached in favor of war. But that is not yet a declaration of war; it is only the decision that they are going to prepare[32] [for] war. The formal beginning of the war takes place much later.

Now what do the Corinthians say? The Corinthian speech—they try to stimulate the Spartans against Athens in the following way. They begin roughly thus: "You Spartans are too good for this world"—good because the Spartans are not as bellicose as[33] [their allies] are. "You are too trustworthy; but this has the consequence that you don't trust others," i.e., you don't trust your allies. "Your allies complain against Athens because you trust the Athenians. Being good natured, you say, 'Oh, the Athenians are not that bad.' And that means, of course, that you don't trust your own allies." That is a good beginning: "You are so honest that you don't believe that others are dishonest, and therefore you are somehow compelled to believe in the dishonesty of your allies. That is a paradoxical situation."

The Spartans are, in spite of their honesty or reliability, unreliable because they are given to hopes. They wait, and they are saved rather by their enemy's mistakes—hence, by chance—than by their own timely preparations. And then the Corinthians want to tell the Spartans the facts of life: "You don't know these Athenians; we are going to tell you what kind of people they are." And this is the first speech devoted to that great theme, which is in a way the central theme of the history: Sparta and Athens. And I think that to get an indication of its significance you can only say that a statement made today about the difference in character between the Soviet Union and the United States, that would be a theme of equal importance. Of course, its contents[34] [would be] entirely different.

The Athenians are innovators, the Spartans are preservers. The Spartans are therefore cautious, apprehensive, and the Athenians daring and full of hope, always acquiring and never enjoying—what our reader called a kind of [asceticism], you see, never enjoying. They are by nature restless and do not permit anyone else to rest. Sparta, on the other hand, is a restful city, and therefore it has also its old, never-changing laws. But the point which the Corinthians make is that if it comes to a conflict between a preserving city like Sparta and a restlessly changing city like Athens, Athens is bound to win, because art

plays such a decisive role in war, especially in naval war, and an innovating, changing city will of course be much more given to change and improvement. In order to make clear how serious the situation on the Peloponnesus is, the Corinthians say: If you Spartans do not invade Attica now so that the Athenians cannot complete their preparations against Potidaea, we will be compelled to seek another alliance and for this impious deed not we, but you Spartans, will be responsible. I suppose that this is an allusion to the possibility of an alliance with the national enemy, Persia. Now what do the Athenians then say? Let us turn to the beginning, chapter 72:

Reader:
Thus spake the Corinthians. The Athenian ambassadors, who chanced to be residing at Lacedaemon upon their business—

LS: "Concerned with other business."

Reader:
when they heard of this oration thought fit to present themselves before the Lacedaemonians, not to make apology themselves for what they were charged with by the other cities, but to show in general that it was not fit for them in this case to take any sudden resolution but farther time to consider. Also they desired to lay open the power of their city, to the elder sort, for a remembrance of what they knew already, and to the younger, for an information of what they knew not, supposing that when they should have spoken, they would incline to quietness rather than to war.[xiv]

LS: You see, Thucydides does something which he rarely does: he gives you the gist of the speech before the speech itself. After all, Thucydides could have done this in all cases; there was no law that you must write speeches, and from the point of view of someone who wanted to write only what can be certainly known, he should not have done more. But however this may be, when he gives the gist of the speech and then the speech itself we have an interesting opportunity to compare the facts as known to Thucydides and what he made of[35] [them]. Now in this particular case, the Athenian ambassadors try to warn the Spartans against the war, and one point they are going to make concerns the power of Athens. Now what do the Athenians do about this point? What do they say about the power of Athens?

Student: They tell them how powerful they were at Salamis.

LS: But, well, that was almost fifty years ago. What do they say about the Athenian navy?

Same Student: They speak about Athenian imperialism.

LS: But do they say anything about how many boats they have? Not a word! Isn't it strange that in a speech in which they want to tell you what power they have, they don't

[xiv] Thucydides 1.72.

say a word about the power of Athens? Here we see Athens for the first time, how Athenians would speak in such a situation about the power of Athens. They don't say a word about the power of Athens. They show the power of Athens by the manner in which they speak. The speech is clearly a reply to what the Corinthians had said. The Corinthians had presented the Athenians as the enslavers of Greece and the Spartans as the liberators of Greece, which of course was simply not correct, for Athens had, to say the least, done more than Sparta for the liberation of Greece from Persia. And also the Corinthians said that the Persians were defeated not by the Athenians, but by the Persians' own mistakes. The Corinthians had completely concealed the great merits of Athens for Greece. Look at the first point which the Athenians must correct.

Student: The Corinthians regard them as barbarians.

LS: The Athenians?

Same Student: Isn't there some indication of that?

LS: No.

Same Student: I thought they compared them with the Persians.

LS: Well, to that extent, yes. Now the other point which the Corinthians made, and which the Athenians must meet, is this: the Athenians are radical innovators, and therefore[36] dangerous. Now how do the Athenians in the flesh reply to that? In the first place, they say that we are the ones who saved Greece from the Persians, and this led immediately to the Athenian empire. In other words, the Athenian empire is not the consequence of some incredible viciousness or corruption on the part of the Athenians, but it was the natural consequence of the most meritorious deed of the Athenians. Not lust for power, but in the first place *fear* compelled us to act as we did, and there is no better excuse for men. And one can easily see how this passage must have impressed itself on Hobbes's mind when he was a relatively young man. The choice was that either we rule imperiously or be in constant danger[37] [ourselves]. Well, there is nothing, as we would say, morally wrong with imperialism. Not *hubris* or unbounded insolence induced this, but we were defeated by the greatest things. Which were they? Which are these greatest things of which we speak?[38] Honor, fear, and profit. Nothing worse than that induced it. We are not enemies of the human race; we are swayed by the things by which all men are swayed. And the primary thing was fear, something for which no one can be blamed." Perhaps we should read this paragraph, chapter 76.

Reader:
For you also, men of Lacedaemon, have command over the cities of Peloponnesus and order them to your best advantage. And had you, when the time was, by staying it out, been envied in your command, as we know well, you would have been no less heavy to the confederates than we, you must have been constrained to rule imperiously or to have fallen into danger. So that, though overcome by three of the greatest things, honor, fear, and profit,

we have both accepted the dominion delivered us and refuse again to surrender it, we have therein done nothing to be wondered at nor beside the manner of men. Nor have we been the first[39] in this kind, but it hath been ever a thing fixed for the weaker to be kept under by the stronger.

LS: You see that is the reply to the Corinthians: "You say that we are innovators. We are not innovators; we follow all the established laws, is that not so? Laws which you yourselves also obey." Yes?

Reader:
Besides, we took the government upon us as esteeming ourselves worthy of the same; and of you also so esteemed till having computed the commodity, you now fall to allegation of equity—

LS: Literally, "You now use the just speech, the[40] [*dikaios logos*]," this figure in Aristophanes's *Clouds*, "and now when it suits you, you speak hypocritically of justice."

Reader:
a thing which no man that had the occasion to achieve anything by strength ever so far preferred as to divert him from his profit. Those men are worthy of commendation who following the natural inclination of man in desiring rule over others are juster than for their own power they need.[xv]

LS: In other words, the Athenians, they say, establish empire and rule imperiously. That is human nature. They cannot be blamed for that. They are compelled in the first place to become a naval power in order to save themselves from the Persians, and once they had this naval power, this had further effects. And this analysis is supported to a considerable extent by the analysis of Thucydides in chapters 89 following. [The Athenians continue]: "Now this is all right. Now once we had established our empire, we could have been much, much more oppressive and nasty than we were." Justice is possible only within these limits, that is the implication. I mean, the fundamental rules of power, they cannot be changed. But within these limits it is possible to be decent or indecent and within these limits, they contend, we Athenians are decent. And that is the theme which he develops in the sequel.

Student: [. . .]

LS: You are quite right. That is a point which I have not mentioned but which I should have mentioned, that when the Corcyraeans became frightened of the Corinthians they offered arbitration, and then the Corinthians said: No, no, it is too late. And that was the incorrect thing which the Corinthians did. That is quite true. And this would, you say, confirm the Athenian point.

[xv] Thucydides 1.76.

Student: You took care of it when you spoke of a mother punishing her child. That was more or less their attitude, wasn't it?

LS: Yes, but this was a special Corinthian point of view, that the power of the mother country or the mother city never ceases. That is perhaps a Corinthian principle of right, but not one which is universally recognized.

Student: Isn't there an extenuating factor in that the Corcyraeans demanded too much from the Corinthians at this moment of debate? Didn't they ask the Corinthians to withdraw all men who were at that moment—

LS: Yes, that is also true. In other words, it would have been after this great investment that the Corinthians had made. Surely because—

Same Student: It would have been a loss of face.

LS: More than that. More than that. The situation would have become more unmilitary and more unfavorable for the Corinthians than it was. That is also true. It shows also how complicated these things are. It is not easy to say which side was absolutely in the right. You know? What Thucydides does, and he does this very well, is that he tries to present that which I call a "clean slate" to give us a clear statement of the problem, because if the whole complication had been stated at any point, we never would have come up to that clear statement of the problem as it was. You know: Should Athens ally itself with an unjust power, because the alternative was to perish. This harsh issue must be faced. And very few people, I believe, would have the nerve to answer this question in the negative universally. And that is of course the issue of foreign politics. The issue appears much more clearly in foreign affairs than in domestic affairs, although in domestic affairs it can also appear.

But to come back to this point, the Athenians do nothing new. They do nothing new. They follow a law which has existed as long as men [have] existed. But I think there is one point we must add and which Thucydides wanted us to add: that the Athenians were the first to say that. That makes a difference, doesn't it? Their courage and ability to say it is true proof of the greatness of Athens. They are silent about the resources of Athens. Archidamus, the Spartan king, will describe it. The Athenians don't speak about it. But they display their resources by presenting, if I may say so, the resourcefulness of the Athenians by their very speech. The Athenians said, and this was also said by Thucydides in the summary of the speech preceding the speech itself, that they are not going to apologize for Athens. Strangely, in a sense they do apologize for Athens. They vindicate Athens. They do not apologize in the narrow sense that they do not show that they had a right to act in the case[s] of Corcyra and Potidaea; that they refuse to do. But they state the principles, which include an apology for Corcyra and Potidaea. Within the natural limits, we have been just, they say.

You see also another important point. They do not forswear further expansion. In no way. In this sense, one could say that their speech is provocative. But we must also say that

they warn definitely against war, and suggest peaceful settlement of the differences. What characterizes the Athenian speech is something which is mentioned as an Athenian characteristic by Plato, especially in the *Gorgias*: [*parrhēsia*],[xvi] literally translated as the ability and willingness to say everything: frankness, no hypocrisy. This they display, but it comes from power. Their [*parrhēsia*] proves their power.

Now we come to the speech of Archidamus, the Spartan king. Now let us look at the beginning, immediately before the speech. Thucydides says something about it. He was reputed to be an intelligent, moderate, sober man. Now he was reputed to be—does Hobbes say that all? Yes: "reputed" to be. Now what does this mean? That could mean two things: in the first place, it could mean that I, Thucydides, do not regard him as intelligent and sober, but this was the reputation. But it could also mean of course that Thucydides does not deny that he deserved the reputation, but that he rather wants to say that in addition to being intelligent and sane, he also had the reputation of being it. And the reason why he might say that is this. In spite of his high reputation, he failed. This would of course throw light on the situation, [on] how powerful was the war spirit in Sparta.

Now Archidamus warns against the war not because the Athenians are in the right—he doesn't say that—but because of the enormous risk involved, especially since we are totally unprepared. Also we must beware of being thought to have begun the war, a very important consideration not only for the Spartans but for the Athenians as well. No one here is so Machiavellian that he says that we don't care for the opinion of the other cities. They are very much concerned. There is later on, in the seventh book, a passage which says that the Spartans had, as we would say, an uneasy conscience all the time in the first war—up to 421—because they believed that they had begun the war, they had broken the treaty.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, and they are punished for that. They were concerned with that. The Athenians were less concerned with it, but, technically, the Athenians did not break the treaty.

Student: But in the speech [of the Spartan envoys to Athens in book 4 they will say][xvii] that the confederates went to war without knowing who started the war.[xviii] In the speech they make asking for peace they say they don't know which side started the war. They won't admit it there.

LS: But the point is that this was a concern not to be known as the one who has started the war. Archidamus continues: "We should not be indifferent to what the Athenians do to our allies[41]—of course not[42]—[but] if the Athenians go on, we must wage war. But we should first carefully prepare it, even contemplate alliance with the barbarians, i.e., the Persians. It is not cowardly for many not to rush into war with a single city." And when

[xvi] *Gorgias* 487a3, 487b1, 487d5, 491e8, 492d2, 521a6.
[xvii] The transcript has ellipses here.
[xviii] Thucydides 4.20.

he gives the defense of Sparta against the [allegation of] Spartan slowness—against the Corinthian attack, the Corinthian comparison of Sparta with Athens—[he argues that] this slowness is in fact moderation, a sense of shame, and a product of the Spartan education. The word education, which occurs [again] only in the funeral speech,[43] when Pericles speaks of Athens, is mentioned here by Archidamus in his speech about Sparta. And then he makes a remark to counter the Corinthians' description of the Athenians—chapter 84, towards the end.

Reader:
And this modesty of ours maketh us both good soldiers and good counsellors: good soldiers, because shame begetteth modesty, and valour is most sensible of shame; good counsellors in this, that we are brought up more simply than to disesteem the laws and by severity more modestly than to disobey them, and also in that we do not, like men exceeding wise in things needless, find fault bravely with the preparation of the enemy and in effect not assault him accordingly, but do think our neighbour's cogitations like our own, and that the events of fortune cannot be discerned by a speech; and do therefore always so furnish ourselves really against the enemy as against men well advised. For we are not to build our hopes upon the oversights of them but upon the safe foresight of ourselves. Nor must we think that there is much difference between man and man, but him only to be the best, that hath been brought up amongst the most difficulties.[xix]

LS: "There is not much difference between man and man," and what is that before? "That the cogitations of our neighbors are similar to our own." This extreme opposition of the national characters, as we could say, of the Athenians and Spartans given by the Corinthians is wrong. The Athenians are men like we; there is no natural difference between the Athenians and us. And if I may impute to this noble king a scandalous expression of the present day, our "categories" are sufficient to understand the Athenians. We do not know this unnecessary wisdom of the Corinthians. They are sufficient to understand them and to anticipate the Athenians' plans. If they were as the Corinthians described them, they would not be well-advised people, they would be madmen. And [to think] that would be the greatest mistake upon our part. But we take them to be people that can be well-advised, and therefore we are on our guard against them. He agrees with the Athenians against the Corinthians regarding the unforeseeability of the outcome of the war, the power of chance. Archidamus is the only one of the four speakers who does not mention the gods. It is noticeable, but interpretation is certainly not easy.

The fundamental difference between Sparta and Athens, I think, comes out in this point. To be well-advised presupposes subordination to the laws. We shall see when we come to the funeral speech that there is a great difference in this respect between Athens and Sparta. At the beginning of chapter 85,[44] [Archidamus] emphasizes the necessity of quiet, of rest[45] [*hēsychian*]: not excitable, not in motion. This is a fundamental distinction which Thucydides makes all the time. It is not legal to begin the war until we have acted on the Athenians' offer to settle the differences by bringing up the question of right. He is not

[xix] Thucydides 1.84.

certain that the Athenians are in the wrong in the precise sense, i.e., guilty of breaking the treaty. That is the only thing of interest to him. This deep analysis of the national character which the Corinthians have given is of no interest to him. Do they break the treaty or not? He does not even discuss the broad issue of Athenian imperialism and the right of the stronger. This is what he means about ever-great cleverness about the useless things. You see the true gentleman. He implies, of course, and that is the key political issue, that we can afford to lose Potidaea, which the Athenians are now besieging. Or rather, we cannot save Potidaea even if we wanted it, because we are absolutely unprepared. To this one could say: Well, is that not your fault, Archidamus? Why did you not start the preparation some time ago? What would be the reply to that? "This is not the Spartan manner. We wait. We will always have time." That is the posture which he takes.

Student: Isn't the problem of money involved here? Isn't it a principal issue?

LS: But they could have started raising the money a few years ago—

Same Student: But the public has no money, and the private won't give it.

LS: Yes, but they don't rush. Now the next point is the speech of the Ephor; he is a democratic official in Sparta.[xx] That is a very brief speech, one brief chapter. The theme is very clear: the Athenians are in the wrong; they are committing, or have committed, acts of injustice. The Athenians have not attempted to prove that they do not commit acts of injustice. The term "committing acts of injustice" occurs five times in the short speech.[46] The emphasis is absolutely that the Athenians are criminals; but nonetheless he indicates what Thucydides would call the truest cause: We won't permit the Athenians to become greater than they are. So he is not a disinterested defender of justice, of course, but he speaks very much of it. And that is rather constant, I think, in the third book in the great debate between Cleon and Diodotus, where Cleon demands the extinction of the Mityleneans and Diodotus demands that they be spared. Cleon is the one who speaks all the time of right, right, right, right: They committed crimes, they must be punished. And Diodotus, the really decent man, says: Who cares for right? He wants to speak from a strictly practical point of view: Is it practical for us to kill the Mityleneans? And some people think that this Diodotus is absolutely cold blooded, but Thucydides wants to show that those who talk most of right are not necessarily those who are the justest people. The sober gentleman, Archidamus, is almost silent on[47] right, on justice; the demagogic Ephor, just the opposite. And the end, how does the end go, the last sentence?

Reader:
Wherefore men of Lacedaemon, decree the war, as becometh the dignity of Sparta; and let us not the Athenians grow yet greater, nor let us betray our confederates, but in the name of the Gods proceed against the doers of injustice.[xxi]

[xx] The Ephors were a board of five magisrates chosen by lot, the democratic mode of selection in the Greek *polis.* They were in charge of foreign policy, among other matters.
[xxi] Thucydides 1.86.

LS: That is the reply to what Archidamus says about the unpreparedness of the Spartans: the gods will take care of that. Whether he believes it is another matter, but surely—[xxii] In Athens—we heard the debate in Athens before—there was no debate among Athenians, but two contradictory decisions: first, against the alliance, and after [. . .] Here we have a debate, an intra-Spartan debate, but only one decision. That seems to be a picture of the two cities, but that is greatly misleading because the debate in Sparta was much less decided than it seems to be here.

Student: Somewhere, I think it is in the first book, it says that the Athenians went around and talked with one another; and in another case, you know, when Pericles decided to answer the Spartans once and for all, and they wouldn't let them talk to one another for days in their assembly,[xxiii] this indicated—

LS: Yes, sure, but that by no means decides it. Now let us read chapter 88, the last one for today:

Reader:
The Lacedaemonians gave sentence that the peace was broken and that war was to be made, not so much for the words of the confederates as for fear the Athenians'[xxiv] greatness should still increase. For they[48] saw that a great part of Greece was fallen already into their hands.[xxv]

LS: In other words, the key point is the fact that the legal question—whether the Athenians acted rightly in the Corcyraean and Potidaean affair—played no role to speak of, but the possession of Potidaea, that was the matter. That would make the Athenians too powerful for Sparta's comfort. And here he says that "they saw" that the better part of Greece [was] already subject to the Athenians. That thing which was most invisible in the speeches was very visible to the eye. Because it in itself did not give a valid reason for war—valid according to the accepted notions of right. What was right and what was wrong was simply determined by the terms of the treaty, of the thirty-year treaty of which about sixteen years were still running. That was it, and nothing else. If the thirty years were up and the treaty were no longer valid, then one could very well make new conditions, and if they were not accepted, go to war. But given that the [49][terms] of the treaty were still valid, it was therefore of great importance externally that it not be broken.

Student: What do you think of that device (I call it a device) that the Ephor had them first give their votes by voice, and then later he had them go out and stand on this side and on that side?

LS: Does not Thucydides explain this?

[xxii] There was a break in the tape or the tape was changed at this point.
[xxiii] The student's references are obscure. He may have in mind Pericles's refusal at 2.22.1 to permit the Athenain assembly to meet when he fears that it will make the wrong decision.
[xxiv] In the original: "the Athenian greatness"
[xxv] Thucydides 1.88.

Same Student: Yes, to some extent. He says that he desired "that it might be evident that their minds were inclined most to the war."[xxvi]

LS: They don't vote by ballots. They vote by[50] [voice], not by balllots. And it was rather clear that the majority was in favor of war, but the Ephor wants to be quite sure, and also I think he brings pressure on some weaker souls, and so he says: Those in favor of war go here, and those not in favor go there.[51] To know—but also to impress. And then it became very clear that the large majority was in favor of war. That was an ordinary political trick.

Student: Is it weighing too much on the words to say that he didn't put that question about war to the people, but rather the question whether the Athenians had broken the treaty or not? And the question of war was never put to them; he changed the question.

LS: Now let me see. The question is only: Has the treaty been broken, and are the Athenians in the wrong? This is decided, and they cannot decide more because only part of the allies are present, and only at the next assembly, which we reach in chapter 120 or so, will the decision be reached.

Student: I got the impression from the opening part of 87 that if he put them both in there—the time it went "*viva voce*"[xxvii]—that his motion would be the final sentence of his speech, which [ends with the] the invocation "Let us proceed against the doers of injustice."[xxviii]

LS: Yes, but that is not yet formally the issue at this assembly.[52] This assembly is only the Spartan assembly by itself. The war decision can only be made by a complete assembling of the confederacy, and here only a part of the allies were present. You see? The Spartans now decide that there will be war, but that does not yet mean a formal declaration of war, that comes only later. I do not think that this is—after all, the speech, the justifying speech of the Ephor is one thing, and the formal decision is another thing. Of course, that the decision means eventually war is true, but it is not in itself a declaration of war. The Spartan assembly is not competent to declare war for the Peloponnesian Confederacy.

Student: . . . What would the question have been?

LS: "Did the Athenians break the treaty? Did they commit an unjust act by what they did in the Corcyra and Potidaean affair?" And this question was answered in the affirmative by the Spartan assembly. But it must also be answered by the whole Peloponnesian Confederacy, which is not now assembled and which therefore cannot make a decision. Then of course the question still arises: Is the unilateral decision of the Peloponnesian Confederacy immediately valid? There was an offer of arbitration, as Archidamus had

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[xxvi] Thucydides 1.87.
[xxvii] Thucydides 1.87.
[xxviii] Thucydides 1.87.

pointed out, and this must be considered somehow. And you see that the Spartans are aware of the fact, [so] that they send an ambassador to Athens all the time for about another year until the war starts. And they eyewash; and it is true on the other hand that the eyewash is not altogether irrelevant, because there are adequate reasons for that. That we will see when we come to the final things, when we come to the last part of the negotiations.

Student: I was going to talk to this point. It seemed to me that the Ephor's motion or speech is an irregularity from Archidamus's point of view, that is he is talking to a different point than Archidamus pointed out, namely, the question of right. He made his motion on the basis of right, not on the question that Archidamus addressed himself to: the wisdom of war.

LS: Sure, but there is an overall issue. I tried to speak on this before, but evidently I didn't make myself understood. But in one way they do speak on the same subject. What is that subject? Everyone speaks on that subject: Should there be war? Everyone speaks on that. The Corinthians say yes, the Athenians say no. The king says no, and the Ephor says yes. Now the question of the war is moved to the question: Did the Athenians break the treaty? Or: Did the Athenians commit illegal acts? But it [is] of course not identical, because a really rough guy could say: Regardless of whether[53] [the Athenians] aggrandized themselves legally or illegally, this aggrandizement is unbearable and we must make war. But Archidamus disregards the legal question entirely on this good legal ground: the legal question is not decided; the Athenians have offered arbitration; we don't know yet which concessions they are going to make.[54] And Sthenelaidas simply decides unilaterally the legal question: it is a notorious fact that the Athenians have done an injustice to the Corinthians. Strange as it sounds, these very ruthless Athenians—you know, as far as the Peloponnesians are concerned—agree with Archidamus; they are also the two in the middle. They agree with him that one should explore further the rights and wrongs of the situation. I have the feeling[55] that actually the Athenian speech is this. They make a proposal: Let us explore the question of right. Is it absolutely acceptable to them; that is to the practical man the most important thing. But these terrible things they say about power and that kind of thing must be grating on his ear. How can one say such things? I'm sure that he had also heard quite a few things[56] [about how] Sparta had also had her share in power politics. You know the Athenians, the story which will come up next time—I mean, Sparta has not been a complete angel, you know, to do that. But these are not things which one proclaims. You know? But as to the practical point as to what is to be done now, the next step, further negotiations or no negotiations—I mean, further *serious* negotiations or not—they agree: further serious negotiations. And the Ephor cuts this off.

Student: Is it not that the Ephor—he wants war anyhow, but in order to get war, to get the process of war started, he's got to clear this legal technicality out of the way. The happier he is, the sooner the Spartans agree under some kind of moral compulsion which he used to get the vote. He gets the Spartans to say: OK, the Athenians have broken the law; this is one of the steps, at this point you can now go on. He's got to keep[57] [the matter] out of the way; he's not interested in the legal question at all, I don't think.

LS: Yes, but isn't it interesting that just as little as Cleon is [interested] in that in the third book, [58]they use these words, whereas the more decent people like Archidamus and Diodotus in the third book do not? They argue politically and not legally. I think this is the point which Thucydides wants to make.

Student: What does Archidamus think of the gods?

LS: That is a very long question. One cannot defend—the only fact that struck me is that he is the only one who does not mention the gods. The Corinthians conclude with an emphatic appeal to the gods guaranteeing, watching over oaths—you know, the oaths connected with the treaty which have been broken. The Athenians refer to this. They say: If you start a war, you will have been the ones who will have broken the treaty; and they refer to the gods of oaths. And Sthenelaidas, the Ephor, simply refers to the gods at the end of his speech. Archidamus is the only one who does not.

Student: Regarding the two speeches of the Corinthians, the one before Athens and the other one now before the Spartan assembly: in the first case they speak almost entirely of right—You will be breaking the treaty, etc. [. . .]—and in the second case, they don't even refer to the question. They only refer to it once, saying that "We don't even have to discuss this question."

LS: He says that, but—yes, but the point is this. The Corinthians make a very unpleasant impression in the manner with which they deal with the facts—the complete denial of any merit of Athens, for example, in the Persian wars.[59] But the point, I think, is this: they are partly swayed by their notion of right. I don't believe that this is mere hypocrisy; their notion that the relation of mother country and colony supersedes all other considerations, so that in the case of Potidaea, for example, the fact that Potidaea, which was a colony of theirs, is an ally of Athens and that therefore the Athenians have the legal right to prevent the defection of Potidaea doesn't count. What counts for them is that this is our baby, our child. That is for them a more fundamental relation. I think that plays a certain role. They do not go into the strict legal question: Do the terms of the treaty allow the Athenians to proceed against Potidaea in the way they do? There could be no question about that, that the Athenians had the right.

Student: I was thinking of the first question, where the legal grounds were emphasized to the Athenians themselves, the one point being that they will be breaking the treaty, which they shouldn't do; and, two, that you can't be certain about getting this navy at all. For supposing that you do get it, how can you forecast into the future how this situation would turn out? The Spartans, they say, would never look ahead practically; they would let the Athenians build their walls and all these various things. "You must do this." They don't seem to refer to the breaking of treaties as being important. They stress only to the Spartans the impractical—

LS: But must you not take into consideration that it is a very different situation? You know that was at a time when they still thought they could get on with the Athenians. The

Athenians might permit the Corinthians to punish their wayward children, the Corcyraeans, in the first case. And in the second case it was settled; the Athenians had thwarted them both at Corcyra and Potidaea, and there was no possibility of an understanding between Corinth and Athens. The question now is to get the Spartans.

Student: Doesn't the interest of Corinth dominate over those of the Peloponnese?

LS: Yes, but I think this interest must be understood as specified by this strange view of the Corinthians about the relation of the mother city and the colonies. That doesn't occur in any other place. After all, he doesn't speak of any economic trade or other interests or this kind of thing, and somehow the word "prestige" is too vague also. As I say, it is this relation of the mother city to the colonies which plays a very great role, and I think that somehow that is a more important, more fundamental notion of right than anything connected with the treaties as treaties.

Student: Is there not considerable jealousy? Were not the Peloponnesians in general very jealous of this power and wealth of Athens? Couldn't there be something involving Megara which is not mentioned here?

LS: Yes, that is played down by Thucydides, but it is mentioned later. Next time.

Same Student: But only in a couple of words or something, which, as far as I look back on it, would give the Athenians some fairly just cause for complaint against the Corinthians, if he had cared to have it brought in.

LS: According to other reports, the Megarian affair was the immediate cause of the war. Thucydides plays that down; there is no question about it. Now whether that is the right or wrong version—I believe that is not possible to[60] [decide] now, because of course Thucydides is a much greater authority given his demonstrated political judgment as a whole, amply demonstrated by the book as a whole. But on the other hand, Thucydides had also—how shall I say it?—his literary purpose, and a certain manipulation of the facts with a view to these things follows legitimately.

Same Student: I was only thinking in terms of sort of psychoanalyzing, or getting at the motives of the Corinthians, you might say. There seems to be more here than meets the eye, I would have thought.

LS: Yes, but we cannot possibly go into the question of Greek history. We cannot go beyond what Thucydides says of it. And there the striking fact about Corinth is what psychologists would call the "mother complex." I haven't seen anything more yet. But Thucydides surely does not have that respect for Corinth which he has for Sparta, that is clear. They are not particularly nice people, and one could perhaps say that is why their children are so nasty.

So at the next time you will see at the end of chapter 89 how this fundamental issue which is behind Potidaea and Corcyra emerged, namely, the existence of the Athenian

empire. And this will lead to a more fundamental question of right: did the Athenians have a right to their empire? Was this acquired decently or indecently? And that is the question that we will discuss then.

Student: [. . .] Concerning the war and peace parties in Athens.[xxix]

LS: Yes, it was so in Athens and in Sparta that generally speaking the gentlemen, as they called themselves, were in favor of peace, and the common people and their leaders (who also belonged to the gentlemen) were in favor of war. You see, I mean, this notion which we have in modern times of the warlike feudal nobility versus the peaceful democracies is not applicable to all ages, and surely not to this age in Greece. In no way, for they are all very warlike democracies.

Student: This would throw sense on Archidamus's speech.

LS: There is no question that these were warlike democracies. I mean, a citizen was a public soldier.

[xxix] As noted by the transcriber.

Session 3: no date
Book 1, Chapters 88-146

Leo Strauss: You preferred to go more deeply into a part of your assignment than to leave it [at] a more superficial survey of the whole. That is quite all right. I am very satisfied with your paper

Now I have a few remarks to make.[i] The point which I am least satisfied with, as our speaker has anticipated, was your remark about the single word[1] [*apodeixis*]. You know, on demonstration, I think that is, at the end of chapter 97. Then Thucydides says that he is going to give an *apodeixis* to show the force of how the Athenian empire came into being. I think it is not reasonable to think of demonstration here in the mathematical or Aristotelian sense. It doesn't do any harm to think out the difference between a mathematical demonstration and a Thucydidean demonstration, as you did, but I think almost everyone except me would blame you very severely for that. I blame you, but I forgive you. I found particularly satisfactory what you said about the true cause and the non-spoken cause, and this is not limited to the Peloponnesian War, but you showed this excellently with your example of the Trojan War, the most interesting example hitherto [being] Thucydides himself. And you suggested prudently that somehow this would be true of all wars. The question is: What is the alleged cause, the blazing, the shining cause? Now in the Trojan War they have to revenge the breach of hospitality on the part of Paris, the rape of Helen, and in the Persian War—but what is the alleged cause that's shining, the poetically magnified cause of the Trojan War? There must be one also there. What is that?

Student: The abduction of Helen.

LS: I mean the Peloponnesian War, I'm sorry. I mean, what is good for the goose is also good for the gander. There must be a brilliant cause of the Peloponnesian War as well.

Student: That would be what touched it off; that would be Corcyra and Potidaea.

LS: I think it is not so simple. You see, you have seen much of Thucydides's subtlety, but one cannot have a large enough notion of that subtlety, because in one sense what he says is simply not true. The Corcyraean and Potidaean business, that is very real, there is no ideology, no, how do you say it, no mere talk about it; these are very grave military actions which change the situation or were changing the situation in favor of Athens. They are as real as the foundation of the Athenian empire itself. In one way what I'm driving at: the Corcyraeans—the so-called open causes—belong to the deeper causes. If Athens had stopped in 435 and said, "no further aggrandizement," the peace party in Sparta might have won. Athens might have changed her way: Why not? They might have said, "We have enough, we are a saturated power, we do not wish to keep the world always on tenterhooks, so to speak. We are satisfied." They could have done that.

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Corcyra and Potidaea are so important merely because they continue Athenian imperialism, the deeper cause. They are the deeper cause. But there must be also a cause that is set forth.

Student: Does it have anything to do with the Athenian loss of honor when they were helping the Spartans to contend against Helots?[ii]

LS: That was ancient history. It had no immediate effect on the Peloponnesian War, the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War.

Student: How about the idea of the Corinthians that Athens is trying to get so much power that she can take the whole of Greece into her power?

LS: That comes close to it. They call Athens the tyrant city.[2] May I read it? In other words, the war is a war of liberation as much as the Persian War was a war of liberation. This is the true alleged cause, the true visible cause. So much so (whoever reads next time, in chapter 8 or so, will see) that Thucydides himself says: That was it which animated all the Greeks against Athens.[iii] So in other words, Thucydides does the same thing which Homer does. If Homer magnifies the Trojan War by being silent about the massive power or economic interests of Agamemnon, and speaking only of this very decent thing (that they have to revenge the breach of hospitality by Paris), in the same way there is also such a pretended cause [here]: the liberation of Greece. And there are certain contradictions which Thucydides, I believe, commits in this neighborhood, which we will take up next time. Now there were two of you which raised your hands, and you are one of them.

Student: Well, I was going to say, alleged causes might have been seen in the accusations of justice and injustice as to who first broke the treaty.

LS: Yes, this is also an important point, surely. This very limited issue, that is quite true. But again, let us look at it. Who broke the treaty? Who broke the treaty? All right, in other words, we have a rather limited question. We have no longer the question of justice largely understood, but in a very precise way, here are these legal stipulations. You know? The peace treaty is running still sixteen more years, and until these sixteen years have run, no one can do anything that will change the situation. If the Athenians legally expanded in these sixteen years, Sparta has no leg to stand on. Sparta will break the treaty, you know, when she sees that Athens is growing peacefully, legally. What could

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[iii] Thucydides 2.8. Though Strauss captures the general sense of this chapter, this specific phrasing does not occur in Hobbes's translation. The full passage in Hobbes reads as follows: "But men's affections for the most part went with the Lacedaemonians, and the rather, for that they gave out they would recover the Grecians' liberty. And every man, both private and public person, endeavoured as much as in them lay both in word and in deed to assist them and thought the business so much hindered as himself was not present at it. In such passion were most men against the Athenians, some for desire to be delivered from under their government and others for fear of falling into it. And these were the preparations and affections brought into the war."

Sparta do legally about it? That they have made a mistake in making the peace treaty, that is not a reason for breaking the treaty. Well, let us raise one of the most famous questions of international law: Are not all covenants between sovereign states made *rebus sic stantibus*, the situation remaining as it is? But who is going to interpret that, that the situation has materially changed? You know this great difficulty.

But to come back to the simple legal question, we can safely say this (and I think that will come out clearer as you go), the legal question is absolutely dark: Who broke the treaty? And from the very narrow and precise point of view one would have to say that the Spartans broke the treaty. These were allegations which the Spartans made in their own assembly, but that of course doesn't settle the issue. That proves only that Sparta accuses Athens; that doesn't prove that Athens—and [. . .] in book 1 simply denies that Athens broke the treaty.[iv] You know, we discussed this last time, just how complicated this matter with Corcyra was. Athens was entitled to make that treaty with the Corcyraeans, and she was entitled to put down the revolt of the Potidaeans. And only the Corinthians' crazy notions that the mother–child relation overrides all other considerations that has no basis in positive law or any unwritten law was against them. Did I answer your question?

Same Student: Another fact that is mentioned frequently in this book is that the Athenians will not let the Greeks who are under their power live according to their own laws. And this perhaps would be a justification in nature which is even outside of a treaty.

LS: Let us assume that the Athenians were under a legal obligation to keep these cities as independent cities—autonomous, but as allies, not as subjects. The question would be: Whose business is that? Is this the business of the cities concerned, or is it the business of Sparta and her allies? By the stipulations of this treaty, Sparta agreed that Athens' relations with her allies or subjects is Athens' business. And it wouldn't be considered a breach of the treaty.

Yes. Now as I said, the suggestion you made about the true cause and the apparent cause goes very deeply into the question. The first statement of Thucydides is deliberately provisional. You raised the question of why does he treat Athens' rise to power and not Sparta's. Is this a serious difficulty? You seem to say that is a serious difficulty.

Same Student: I'm not sure. I didn't think that I brought this up as a question. I was merely observing—

LS: Look, power of this kind is relative. Let us say,using imaginary figures, Sparta had one hundred thousand men[3] in 479 and she had one hundred ten thousand men in 435. This rise in power would be nonexistent if Athens had ten thousand men in 479 and two hundred thousand men later on. Granted that Sparta was stronger in 431 than she was at the end of the Persian Wars, she was relatively weaker, whereas Athens was relatively so

[iv] Strauss most likely refers to Thucydides 1.140, where Pericles accuses the Spartans of flouting the arbitration clause of the treaty, whereas the Athenians, by their willingness to honor it, remain within the letter of the treaty.

much stronger. And therefore Thucydides justified himself in presenting only Athens' rise[4] [to] power, seeing in this a subject to be discussed.

Same Student: Yes, I understand it. In some ways, by doing it: by being silent about Sparta, whether or not they had any increase in power between these two dates, in some ways depreciates Sparta. I don't mean that it had any purpose in itself, but the strong effect is to establish conclusively the Athenian power.

LS: Yes, but I think it is absolutely necessary also for this reason. The changing factor, the factor responsible for change, was Athens, not Sparta. You were quite right in saying that one must compare the Athenian speech in Sparta—the Athenian account of the empire—with Thucydides's account of the empire. And that is perfectly true, and that was very nicely put, that in the speech in Sparta the daring Athenians dared to ask the cautious Spartans to be cautious, you know, after they have stated the principle of daring as the only one conformable to a strong city, to[5] demand from a strong city that they should not be daring, so to speak. That is indeed a nice formulation.

And the last point which we have to take up more fully, as you say, is [that] the question of the justice of imperialism must be raised. Yes, surely it must be raised. But does Thucydides raise it? There are interpreters of Thucydides who say that Thucydides regarded imperialism as absolutely unobjectionable from the point of view of justice.

Student: But isn't this connected in some way with asking the question about why does he make such efforts to forcefully establish the Athenian power, that this is the cause of the war?

LS: But this is not an objection, is[6] [it]?

Same Student: No, I don't mean that this is an objection. That leaves a possibility that there are proper ways of establishing an empire as well as improper ways of acquiring empire.

LS: Yes, strictly speaking there is only one improper way of acquiring empire:[7] the inefficient way; i.e., the way not to acquire it. I mean, if imperialism is fundamentally sound, then you can say only, as Machiavelli put it, that men have a natural desire for acquiring. And there is a difference between those who are good at acquiring and those who are bad at acquiring; and those who are bad at acquiring create some troubles, but no serious troubles: the interesting fellows are those who are good at it. And the question is: Did Thucydides see a moral purpose, as we would call it, in imperialism, or did he regard it as something absolutely unquestionable—as something, as the Athenians put it, as an established law of human nature that whoever can will acquire, will expand, and will lord it over the weaker? Did Thucydides accept this view? You see, Thucydides says, in the passage which our speaker has recalled, [that] the Athenians compelled the Spartans to start the war; they compelled it because of their rise in power. The Spartans become frightened, and this is said, by the way, by the Ephor in Sparta himself. So the Spartans are not to blame. That would be, perhaps one could say, taking a very narrow legalistic

view, whether the Spartans should have kept the letter of the treaty. But fundamentally that, [fear], is a respectable cause of war,[8] as the Athenians themselves admitted. But what about the Athenians? The Spartans were innocent, some say, but the Athenians were guilty. Or were they not guilty?

Student: I don't know how worthwhile this is, but I had the idea that Thucydides is upbraiding the Athenians for their empire, the way they got it. But he also contends that the war was inevitable because it would incite fear, fear on the part of the Spartans and jealousy on the part of the Corinthians . . . this jealousy continued throughout the period. But the war could have been won if the Athenians had followed the example of Pericles.

LS: Yes, sure. I mean, that I know that . . .

Same Student: This is the corruption, I think—

LS: Yes, well, there is a school of interpreters who take this view that there is only one thing to blame, and that is insufficient, it is clear.

Same Student: Well, but I say that the evil came after Pericles.

LS: Yes, but that is a secondary question, where it began. It probably began after Pericles. That is all right. We will come to that. But we are concerned first whether this whole approach is justified, and we cannot yet decide it on the basis of the evidence we have now. But we can only raise one point, I believe: that the Spartans are innocent in the translegal sense is clear, if they are forced by fear. But what about the Athenians? A realistic thesis must assert that the Athenians were as much under compulsion as the Spartans; and you know when we are compelled, we cannot be blamed. Now what about that contention? We have heard something about that, and it is not important whether we have heard it today or last time; it is still the same Thucydides we are speaking about.

Same Student: The empire which the Athenians got was at the end of the Persian War, and the Spartans, because of various difficulties with the helots and so on, withdrew and left the Athenians in the position of being the leader. And the Athenians claim that they began in this sense as the leader of the Grecian states for the sake of honor. They thought they were the best to lead it. This has difficulties—

LS: No, no, I think it is more simple than that. If we turn to the Athenian speech in Sparta, they say that they are compelled by fear, fear of the Persian Empire. Sure, that is all right. Let us not complicate matters by things which are not decisive. Later on in the same speech they say they were defeated by the following most powerful or greatest things: honor, fear, and profit. The question is simply this: whether Thucydides would admit that honor and profit are as compulsory as fear. That is the question. The Athenians say that. Whether Thucydides would admit that is an open question. So this is, I think, a more precise formulation of the question: that there are something like basic compulsions for which men and especially cities cannot be blamed cannot be denied. But the question is: How far does this compulsion extend? Did Athens do more than was compulsory, and

hence justifiable? That is the question. I don't say that the question is in any way settled—on the contrary—but we must always keep it open as a question. Can we agree provisionally on that basis? Fine. Then that makes it useful when we have a real question. Now let us turn then to the discussion of today's assignment.

Student: Just one question before we go on. Is there any way to answer your question in the terms that Thucydides first says, "fear, honor and profit," and then in the next paragraph says "honor, fear and profit"?

LS: No, he does not say that. He says first "fear," and then he puts the three as equally important for the emergence of the Athenian empire. You will remember the passage which I quote. Where is that? In 75 and 76. Yes, not that is true, but in the first place he says: "in the first place, in the highest degree, by fear, then also by honor, and finally also by profit." That is, of course, they came in in a subordinate manner, but in the second statement they are treated equally. No, it is more subtle than I presented it from my recollection, but it is essentially the same.

Student: I was wondering if one could argue that once a city becomes maritime, it must of necessity be imperialistic. Now Thucydides himself seems to say that. And Thucydides in the earlier part of the book commends[9] Minos for having rid the seas of pirates and for providing the possibility of the people coming down from the hills and occupying the valleys—in other words, the very possibility of Greek civilization. Thus he would in a sense be commending the Athenian empire as the second great development, or the second great possibility of the articulation of the society and thus would favor imperialism.

LS: No, that we can take for granted on the basis of the few things which we have discussed. The solution of Thucydides will not be a simple one and will be in proportion to the immense complexity of human things, that is clear. But that does not precisely explain the thesis that he was imperialist. That is also too simple. The other view, that he was simply a wonderfully decent Athenian gentleman of the old school who as such had the greatest sympathy for the nice Spartans rather than for the newfangled Athenians, is also too simple. We must somehow find unity. When I read Thucydides [10]I somehow have the impression that I can understand the circle which he describes, I know somehow the radius. That is a very poor simile, I know, but I cannot follow the periphery all the time. I see only certain parts of the periphery. It is infinitely complex, and we must be patient.

One word I would like to say regarding the four speeches in Sparta which we have never observed before, although it is so patent. There we found the first, almost shameless statement of imperialism—you know, by the Athenians, and both the Spartan king and the Spartan Ephor answer. Neither the king, nor even the Ephor, criticizes these principles. I mean, how easy it would have been for them to say: Look, they stand self-confessed as these abominable imperialists. Nothing of the kind. And I think that if you go through the whole book, you will find [that] only one man, or body of men, oppose

these principles as such. That is of course one of the most famous things of the whole work. No, Diodotus, that is much more limited; on the contrary, he accepts imperialism.

Student: But Cleon says: No dice.[11]

LS: No, but the issue is different, though. The Melians, on the island of Melos—in the second half of the first book, the Athenians state their imperialistic principles much more ruthlessly than they stated them before. And the Melians deny them. That is the only discussion of the principles themselves which we have. Yes, but you see how subtle Thucydides is. Who are the Melians? Nice people. But they have no other defense except to appeal to the principles of justice, and they are absolutely ruined. The Athenians go over them like a steamroller. So I think that is one of the greatest artistic achievements ever made by man, and especially since Thucydides's situations are surely not as simple as they look. These poor fellows, they just cried, and this cry is an appeal to justice, and that is all there is to it—this is surely not the situation. But it is also important that no one else in the whole book acts on these principles. We could say that it is perhaps characteristic that the principles are stated only by the Athenians in these two cases, because Pericles himself does not state them explicitly in this way, and on the other hand the Melians defend them.

Student: Would you confirm me about my feeling about the Melians, that they remind me of a kind of intransigent young boy in their adherence to these principles at all costs and practically have no notion whatsoever of the situation they are in?

LS: In other words, Thucydides is infinitely more mature than the people who stick either to the one or the other principle. Well, that is a good point, only you shouldn't say young boy—

Same Student: Well, I was thinking of a poetical account—

LS: Yes, yes, surely I think that is the overwhelming impression that one must ever have in reading Thucydides is his amazing wisdom, which shows itself also in the way in which he speaks of it.

Now let us come now to our assignment finally, and you see here we have—to make it a bit clearer, this dealt with [. . .][v] before the Peloponnesian War. It gives a survey of the rise to power, especially in the Grecian world, up [to] the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. Then we have 435 to 432, the Corcyraean and Potidaean affair. Now we get 479 to 435—you see, we return from 431 to 435, and now we return still more, still farther in the past. Here in the beginning was the affair of Epidamnus, who tried to get help from Corcyra, and the Corcyraeans decline it. Then they go to the oracle in Delphi, and the oracle in Delphi tells them: Go to Corinth, to your grandmother. And Corinth, acting according to the oracle, accepts it. In other words, as I said last time, it begins with a completely clean slate. This is of course an act of abstraction which Thucydides makes in order to let us see the problem. There is never naturally a clean slate, but if you want to

[v] In the transcript: "X."

see the problem of justice at all you must start from a simple situation. And this is the simple situation. The Corinthians act justly: they act according to what the Delphic god said; and what the Delphic god said is apparently very reasonable. Here he goes still further back: 479. After the battle of Salamis, the Athenians had saved Greece—a perfectly clean slate. Whether there were complicated issues regarding the Persian Wars, whether they were not one hundred percent just on the side of Greece, is a question which doesn't concern us. For practical purpose[s], that is a good beginning.

Now what happened? Well, in the first place, we are told that something happened, that something entered the world that had never been known before, and that is Athenian daring. The Athenians were not daring prior to the Persian Wars; that is emphasized very strongly in a few pages, in a few passages. And here Thucydides speaks in his own name of this daring. We know that this daring had been spoken of by enemies of Athens, but we now know that in Thucydides's own view[12] this is a characteristic of Athens at least from that time on. And then Thucydides describes the whole beginning of the empire, and it is clear that this empire had fundamentally a perfectly good and just basis. The Athenians are the leaders, and the Athenians protected in fact these islands and cities in Asia Minor; and as Hobbes has put it, there is a necessary correlation between protection and obedience. You know, the Athenians could not protect these people if the people did not obey them, i.e., the transition into subjection was inevitable, and especially because the Spartans, instead of going on with the war against Persia, withdrew. And the only leader they had to send out, Pausanias, was a miserable fellow who repelled everyone. And these people repelled by the Spartans turned to the respectable and nice Athenian leader, Themistocles. So innocent was the beginning of the Athenian empire. But it is also true that Themistocles from the very beginning was intending empire. In other words, the empire was not merely due to the necessity of the situation; it [was] also due to Themistocles's divination of the possibility of empire.

We cannot unfortunately go into the details. Only one point which is important for the plan of the book must be discussed, the passage referred to by the speaker. In the first, from chapter 89 to chapter 96 roughly, Thucydides gives an account of the earlier ways; and then goes on in chapter 97:

> Now using their authority at first in such manner as that the confederates lived under their own laws and were admitted to common council, by [the] war and administration of the common affairs of Greece from the Persian war to this[vi] [the Peloponnesian War—LS] what against the barbarians, what against their own innovating confederates, and what against such of the Peloponnesians as chanced always in every war to fall in, they effected those great matters following. Which also I have therefore written both because this place hath been pretermitted by all that have written before me (for they have either compiled the Grecian acts before the invasion of the Persians or that invasion only, of which number is Hellanicus, who hath also touched them in his Attic history, but briefly and without exact mention of the times), and also because they carry with them a demonstration of how the Athenian empire grew up.

[vi] Thucydides 1.97.

LS: Now this is strange, you see, because the narrative is interrupted by something which people have called the second preface. Why here? Well, you can of course interpret it as pure accident, that this was an early note of Thucydides which, because he died too soon, was not integrated. Or one can also say that perhaps it makes sense. Now where does this passage come in? What preceded it? There is a story of the Athenian hegemony, when Athens did not yet have an empire, and what he speaks of later on is the emergence of the empire proper. But it means also something else. The chief content of the preceding chapters is the story of Pausanias and Themistocles, the Spartan leader and the Athenian leader, and what is told afterward is the story of what came after Pausanias and Themistocles. And this is fraught with a great implication, because by this very fact our attention is drawn—emphatically drawn—to the subject Pausanias and Themistocles. What happens to that subject later on? It is taken up again. There are two cases which are outstanding in which Thucydides repeated the same thing: one is the case of the Athenian tyrants, which he spoke of before and which he will take up again in book 5; and the other is Pausanias and Themistocles, which is discussed here and which will be discussed here too. [LS evidently points to the blackboard.] But whereas here they begin the section, in this section they continue—they are not the beginning of the section. I will come back later to that. I believe, in other words, that it is intelligible that Thucydides makes this distinction here.

There is one point which is interesting as a partial justification of Athenian imperialism, in chapter 99, which we should read:

Reader:
Amongst other causes of revolts the principal was their failing to bring in their tribute and galleys and their refusing (when they did so) to follow the wars. For the Athenians exacted strictly and were grievous to them by imposing a necessity of toil which they were neither accustomed nor willing to undergo. They were also otherwise not so gentle in their government as they had been, nor followed the war upon equal terms, and could easily bring back to their subjection such as should revolt.[vii]

LS: In other words, they came [. . .] But how does he go on?

Reader:
And of this the confederates themselves were the causes.

LS: You see. Why?

Reader:
For through this refusal to accompany the army the most of them, to the end they might stay at home, were ordered to excuse their galleys with money, as much as it came to, by which means the navy of the Athenians was increased

[vii] Thucydides 1.99.

at the cost of their confederates, and themselves unprovided and without means to make war in case they should revolt.

LS: You notice that they preferred to stay at home and to pay for the navy, and the Athenians said: All right. But the consequence was that they were not under compulsion to defend themselves, but also that they were not able to defend themselves. And they have only themselves to blame. Well, there follow other stories. For example, the Spartans are paralyzed for a period by an earthquake and by a rising of the helots, the old injustice of the Spartans. That is an injustice, but it is an old injustice and old injustice no longer has the quality of being as offensive as recent injustice. That is so. How does the witch in Goethe's *Faust* put it? This was applied to the political question by a man who understood a good bit of it: by Bismarck. "I have here a little bottle," she says, "which does no longer stink in the least."[viii] That is Bismarck's reply to old injustices. It is also a witch's brew, but it does no longer stink. Unfortunately, we cannot go into this thing.

There is another point which is interesting regarding the campaign of the Athenians in Egypt, and Thucydides speaks of that first in chapter 104 and takes it up again in chapter 109 or 110. And in the meantime, chapters 105 to 108, there are other matters. What does this mean? The Egyptian campaign was a complete failure, and this is very dramatically said at the end of chapter 110—is it, or did I make a mistake? Yes: "The affairs regarding the great campaign of the Athenians and their allies into Egypt ended thus in this manner."[ix] That is a kind of foreshadowing of the other big affair of the Athenians later on: the Sicilian business. But that was in the west, and Egypt was in the east, or relatively speaking in the east, but fundamentally it was the same thing: a transmarian[x] expedition. And this is of crucial importance, because while Athens was stopped in the east, she had to expand on the mainland, and that means conflict with Sparta. You see, if they had expanded successfully in Egypt and conquered it, that would not necessarily have led to conflict, as I say. And that Thucydides[13] [succeeds in presenting] by surrounding these mainland affairs, which were tolerably successful, by the disastrous Egyptian affair. Again, there is a single story of Athenian failure in the north, in Thessaly, among successes nearer home, with the same result.

The last story told here is that of the island of Samos. Some Samians come to Athens for an alliance against the rulers of Samos. They want to establish a democracy. And the Athenians succeed, Pericles succeeds, in putting down the revolt by the Samian oligarchs. That is the first clear allusion—apart from some of the remarks in the Corcyraean affair regarding the domestic policy problem—[to] the relation of the common people and the rich. The emphasis throughout is on the *polis* as a unit and not [on] an intra-polis problem. They come out very well, but the emphasis is on the foreign policy thing. Here there is a reference to it, and that is a point which we must discuss later. You cannot understand imperialism proper if you do not enter into the question of the consequences of imperialism for the *polis* within. Well, in stating the most extreme point: if you say

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[viii] *Faust*, part 1, scene 6, 2523-34.

[ix] Thucydides 1.110. Hobbes translates as follows: "Thus ended the great expedition of the Athenians and of their confederates into Egypt."

[x] That is, overseas.

that the question of right has no meaning whatsoever as far as the *polis* is concerned, that has some effects on the citizens in their relations with the *polis*. That is the difficulty. We will take this up later. And Alcibiades is in a way the embodiment of this problem. The traitor [. . .] the founder of the Athenian empire and, as traitor, that is a symbolic fact. Not that all traitors are founders of empires—[as] proved by Pausanias, to say nothing of Aaron Burr. But the other figure is more interesting. One point we should read in this section, and that is in chapter 118, toward the end—say, the last third of that chapter:

Reader:
This the Lacedaemonians saw and opposed not, save now and then a little, but, as men that had ever before been slow to war without necessity—[xi]

LS: In other words, that is the point, that is also the point. In a way, the Athenians cannot be blamed—in a way, because their expansion was unresisted.

Reader:
and also for that they were hindered sometimes with domestic war, for the most part of the time stirred not against them; till now at last, when the power of the Athenians was advanced manifestly indeed and that they had done injury to their confederates, they could forebear no longer, but thought it necessary to go in hand with the war with all diligence and to pull down, if they could, Athenian greatness. For which purpose it was by the Lacedaemonians themselves decreed that the peace was broken and that the Athenians had done unjustly; and also having sent to Delphi and enquired of Apollo whether they should have the better in the war or not, they received, as it is reported, this answer: "That if they warred with their whole power, they should have victory and that himself would be on their side, both called and uncalled."

LS: Now that is very ironical, but not merely ironical. The irony is clear, one could perhaps say. But in order to understand an irony, one must first be a very simple child, and not have any naughty ideas and take it very literally. The Delphic god is on the side of Sparta and promises to help them. Who will win the war? The Spartans. Is that not interesting? I think your smiling is quite correct, that Thucydides did not believe that as he made even the remark in chapter 122 that the Delphic god, or rather the oracle, had very practical interests in siding with Sparta. You know, today you can say that. So Thucydides did not simply believe that. But again, there is a kind of symbolic truth in that, *if* there should be some truth in the view that there is a power of right. This is of course, I mean, Thucydides would not believe that the gods would take care of that—I think there is no reason to believe that he did—but that in a natural way it would come about.

Student: Isn't there some question as to whether or not the Spartans [. . .]?

[xi] Thucydides 1.118.

LS: You mean that it didn't trust the Spartans, that the oracle didn't trust the Spartans. In other words, the oracle was more anti-Athenian than Sparta itself?

Same Student: The oracle is safe whichever side won, isn't it? They could always turn around if the Athenians had won and [have] said—

LS: Yes, but nevertheless awkward if the god says that he is going to help, "called or uncalled," and the Athenians win.

Same Student: They could, however, blame it on the—

LS: Sure, that's right. But it is still unpleasant if he has gone out on a limb to that extent. Sure. That is clear. Now we come to—now we are already in the next section. You see, here he continues: Chapter 119—let us make this simple—to chapter 132. You see, in a way it is a continuous history from Corcyra on to the assembly in Sparta. And then we have what happened after that assembly in Sparta, and that takes up another thirty-five of thirty-six chapters, and there is the second speech of the Corinthians in Sparta in chapter 120 following. The speech of the Corinthians is now of course somewhat different from the speech they made before. In the first place, they had to try to get the Spartans into war, and now they must tell the Spartans how terribly difficult the war is. There is a remark of Churchill's somewhere in his book on the Second World War—Lord Alanbrooke[xii] tells this story—[14][about] how one had to talk to the Americans prior to Pearl Harbor and after Pearl Harbor, and he put it in his homely way as this: "Now that she—after she is in the harem, America, one can talk differently to her than before she entered the harem." This is a very crude statement, but intelligible. And fundamentally it happens here: the Corinthians, now that Sparta is in, can now tell the real things which Archidamus, the king, had said before. To defeat Athens is terribly difficult: she is terribly powerful. In the beginning, the Corinthians spoke only of the injustice of Athens or her expansionism in the first speech. They stress, of course, the fact that the Peloponnesians are those who have been done wrong by the Athenians. Yet clearly the fact that they are in the right does not guarantee victory, that is implied. What are the chances of winning the war? That is now the subject. We have to get a navy. No war will work for us, for we have to get our navy trained and to get that knowledge or art, *technē*, which we still lack.

That is the theme which will be taken up later on by Pericles in his reply when he says that they cannot get in a short time this experience and skill as mariners which we Athenians have.[15] Yet the Athenians have more money, but that money comes from their allies, whom we must induce to desert Athens. These are the two themes—the power of Athens and the enormous resources which they get from their allies, and the Athenian navy—and they would have to match that somehow, both the money and the navy. The speech has the obvious function to elicit the maximum effort by stressing the enormous power of Athens.

[xii] Alan Francis Brooke (1883-1963), career officer in the British Army, Field Marshal from January 1, 1944, from 1946 a Viscount who chose as his title his given name Alanbrooke. During the war he was Churchill's foremost military advisor; their relations were affectionate but stormy.

Now the war is finally decided upon. This is now the formal meeting of the Peloponnesian League—you know that formerly that was not the formal assembly. But of course the war has not yet begun, because the Peloponnesians are not yet sufficiently prepared, and this time must be judiciously used until they are properly prepared. And what do they do? Let us read the beginning of 126:

Reader:
In the meantime they sent ambassadors to the Athenians with certain criminations to the end that if they would give ear to nothing, they might have all the pretext that could be for raising of the war.[xiii]

LS: Now this is not well enough translated: "so that this would be the greatest allegation of waging war." The same words which we read in the passage about the truest cause, the truest allegation; it said the truest, but the least visible allegation.[xiv] Now we come to the greatest or biggest allegation—because the truest allegation is not necessarily the biggest allegation. What happens here at this point is another return. We turn now to events which were roughly from 600 to 460. You see there is a partial overlapping here with the Pausanias and Themistocles story, but he goes much further back. And you can see now what he is doing, because I can now tell what happened in the next place[16]—let us call it up to 431 as a convenient date. So there is a simple continuation: 435 to 432; 432 to 431. A simple continuation, but always interrupted by the returns, but returns always further back: 435, 439, 600. That is the curious structure of this book. And there are two movements, forward and backward, and we must see—this [movement to which we come now] is the movement farthest back.[17] That is its interest, because I will tell you what we learn from that. There is something dark about the beginnings, as he says. The beginnings are very dark. Here we approach the beginnings more than any other time. What do we learn about the general character of the beginnings from this? Will you read the sequel?

Reader:
And first the Lacedaemonians, by their ambassadors to the Athenians, required them to banish such as were under curse of the goddess Minerva for pollution of sanctuary. Which pollution was thus. There had been one Cylon an Athenian, a man that had been victor in the Olympian exercises, of much nobility and power amongst those of old time, and that had married the daughter of Theagenes, a Megarean, in those days tyrant of Megara. To this Cylon asking counsel at Delphi the God answered that on the greatest festival day he should seize the citadel of Athens. He therefore, having gotten forces of Theagenes and persuaded his friends to the enterprise, seized on the citadel at the time of the Olympic holidays in Peloponnesus with intention to take upon him the tyranny, esteeming the feast of Jupiter to be the greatest and to touch withal on his particular in that he had been victor in the Olympian exercises.[xv]

[xiii] Thucydides 1.126.
[xiv] Thucydides 1.23.
[xv] Thucydides 1.126.

LS: Yes, here he was mistaken. He had chosen the wrong festival, and therefore he was defeated. And the trouble was that after having tried to make use of the right of asylum, he was killed by the Athenians, and[18] [there] was an old curse on Athens for these things. And the very pious Spartans are now anxious that the Athenians should repair that curse. The Athenians will reply in kind—because you can say that this is absolutely funny, yes, but it is more than that. It is of course funny in so far as a certain hypocrisy of Sparta and Athens is shown: in this case, more of Sparta, because she started it; the Athenians were only compelled to reply in kind. Yes, but what does this mean? We go no further back and we are again confronted, as in the first case, with an oracle. But what kind of oracle is that? You know the first oracle was that given to the Corcyraeans, that they should go to Corinth and get help from Corinth. After all, they couldn't get help from Corcyra: what else could they do? That was the first oracle. This oracle is much less just. The oracle tells him—not explicitly, of course, he wouldn't go on a limb to that extent—but in effect he says: Try to become tyrant of Athens. You know your father-in-law is a tyrant in Megara, and how can you be a good husband to your wife? She can always say to you: My father is tyrant of Megara. I don't say that it[19] happened just that way, but it could have happened. So we have gone a great step further back, and we have come [from] a just oracle and a clean slate altogether to an unjust oracle—or, to be cautious, an oracle of dubious justice. Now if he would go much further back, beyond Cyclon, where would we arrive: at what kind of oracle and of what kind of gods?

Student: At unjust gods.

LS: In other words, the beginning is injustice—and, well, if we read the Archaeology carefully, we know that anyway. But this reinforces the importance this thought has for Thucydides: barbaric, savage beginnings, not good beginnings, and that is the issue throughout the centuries in political theory, now completely blurred because we believe to know so much—you know, through Darwin and other people—so we don't see the problem any more. But that was fundamentally the issue. If you take the biblical story very literally in the second chapter of Genesis, the perfect beginning is clearly described: no scarcity of any kind, men were created perfect, no inducement to harshness, to aggression, to injustice. And to counter this picture, if we may use a biblical symbol and in a way twist it, the fundamental situation is not Cain and Abel, as presented in the Bible, but as if Cain and Abel were the two men on a shipwreck so that they had no choice: either one had to kill the other—they had no choice, they couldn't survive without murder, without killing. The difficulty about the biblical situation was that there was no possible inducement to anything by killing. That is the fundamental issue. That is the point which[20] Thucydides [among many others] also has in mind. When Plato presents apparently the view of perfect beginnings—at least innocent beginnings, without the need for injustice—he tries to remain closer to eternity, although I think Plato too in the end does do that. This is, I think, a point of the greatest importance.

Now there is a violation of the right of asylum in Athens here. The Athenians reply in kind: the Spartans had also violated the right of asylum in the case of their traitorous king Pausanias. And this story is told—it is really a magnificent story just in itself,

disregarding other things, how he is betrayed by a slave who had seen that all men sent to the Persian king by Pausanias did not come back, and now he wanted to send him. And in order to be sure he opened the letter and saw that the Persian king was requested to kill him. This boy very naturally didn't like that thing and denounced Pausanias to the Spartan authorities, but they were very respectful of the members of the ruling class—contrary to Athens, that is important. They were very clever and so they did a thing which I hear is still being done: They were present—now, how is this story? The FBI of Sparta had a conversation with the slave messenger—no, they listen in while the boy has a conversation with Pausanias, and then they stab him to death in the temple. And this is a great violation of sacred law, because no one must die in the temple. And they are very clever: the expiration takes place out of the temple. I think this wasn't good enough, and so [there was] also a curse on Sparta on this ground. And the Athenians say: Here, you are also very criminal to do that.

And then there is an easy transition to the story of Themistocles, but no longer on the basis of sacred right but because of the parallel between Pausanias and Themistocles: both great men in the Persian War, and both traitors to their country and city. And yet there is also a story of asylum. In Themistocles's story, did you observe that when he comes to the Molossian king, fleeing from the Athenians, the king is absent and the wife tells him: Kneel down on the altar with my son. This was supposed to be the most emphatic form of asking for asylum, and this rather barbaric thing was really respected, and it saves Themistocles, and Themistocles escapes to Persia. The interest of these stories of Pausanias and Themistocles is[21] [improperly] explained if one says, as one commentator says, that it shows Thucydides's interest in biography. I believe it is nothing of the kind. Pausanias and Themistocles represent Sparta and Athens. The individual, the Spartan and Athenian individual means [. . .] primarily something like . . . the man who is not simply a member of the community.

Now Pausanias is in no way a danger to Sparta, that is very true. Sparta is so stable. The only thing they have to do is take care of him, and that can easily be done. He was in no way a danger to anyone in the[22] [case] of the other Greeks, and he was easily brought back by the Spartans because he was nothing without Sparta. That silly fool, what could he bring to the Persian king? His own title, nothing more. Themistocles, however, was something without Athens, that is the point. He was such a genius, a man of such outstanding cleverness that he would be not necessarily an adornment but an immense help to any royal court anywhere. Now that is the point: the gifted Athenian individual. The Spartans are not gifted. That does not mean that there were no intelligent Spartans, but this genius . . . The formula which Thucydides uses is—now I think we should read that perhaps: chapter 138, not at the beginning, a bit further on.

Reader:
For Themistocles was a man in whom most truly was manifest the strength of natural judgment, wherein he had something worthy of admiration different from other men. For by his natural prudence, without the help of instruction before or after—

LS: Without having learned anything toward it either before or after, which is a very extreme statement.

Reader:
he was both of extemporary matters upon short deliberation the best discerner and also of what for the most part would be their issue the best conjecturer. What he was perfect in he was able also to explicate, and what he was unpracticed in he was not to seek how to judge conveniently. Also he foresaw, no man better, what was best or worst in any case doubtful. And (to say all in a few words) this man, by the natural goodness of his wit and quickness of deliberation, was the ablest of all men to tell what was fit to be done upon a sudden.[xvi]

LS: Notice here "by the power of nature and the scarcity of care," care in the sense of education and learning. And this term *meletē*, which is used for Sparta especially: this situation, including also—you know, discipline means already learning, training. Spartans were unusually well trained people, and this training is wholly ineffective. A Spartan is sent out of that circuit where there is daily supervision of every individual: if Pausanias commands in Byzantium, he lives as he likes and not as he would live in Sparta, because this supervision doesn't exist. So now one could say the implication is that Pausanias had the maximum of discipline and no genius, and Pericles has the maximum of genius and a minimum of discipline. And somehow they were both in their way terrible men. If we cannot help being more attracted by Themistocles—I mean, even if we take the strictest view, we cannot help being more attracted by Themistocles than by Pausanias.

Student: This point was made by Pericles when characterizing the Athenian ability to live the life of leisure—their ability to pick up their swords and win the war without being under the constant discipline of the barracks.

LS: Yes, sure, but here we have of course the prelude, the extreme case of the criminally great individual in Sparta and Athens.

Student: In connection with Pausanias it is interesting that Thucydides says that the Spartans were afraid to send out someone after him—

LS: Yes, yes, we have of course this very great exception which we shall see later: Brasidas, the greatest ornament of Sparta in the Peloponnesian War. That is not—sure.

Student: Earlier we saw how Themistocles demonstrated his judgment in handling the demands of Sparta that Athens[23] not build a wall—if you recall, how he handled this by trickery. Now from that you deduced that he all along was intending to be a traitor.

[xvi] Thucydides 1.138.

LS: Yes, and I think, if I am not mistaken, that Thucydides himself says so. Let me see if I can find it. Yes, I think in chapter 93 that is to this effect. Doesn't this imply—this story of Themistocles's lying is clear, but in 93 he doesn't speak of that. Now let me see.[xvii]

Student: "Themistocles likewise persuaded them to build up the rest of Piraeus"; "it would very much conduce to the enlargement of their power."[xviii]

LS: It says here explicitly here in chapter 94 that he, Themistocles, was the first who dared to say that the Athenians get hold of the sea—must get hold of the sea, make themselves masters of the sea. That is one—now let me see. Where is this next point? No, that is the strongest statement which I just read.

Student: In that particular incident Themistocles is using his cunning for what seems to be a very just cause: to thwart the inequitable demand of the Peloponnesians.

LS: Yes, but I think that he had a vision of Athenian power far beyond any of his contemporaries, I think that appears from that. But on the whole, that is true. In Themistocles's time there was not yet an Athenian empire proper; that comes much later.

Student: I was struck by Themistocles's banishment—

LS: Yes, I wanted to bring up this point. That is another great difference between Sparta and Athens: I mean the gifted Athenian and the Spartan discipline. The Spartans are nice to their leading men; that is a sign of a stable society. A tyrannical society cannot be very nice; you see the problem which Khrushchev is trying to solve in the case of Molotov.[xix] But the Spartans are nice to their leading men. The Athenians, however, ostracize Themistocles, that is the other side of the picture. Why? Sparta is not threatened by individuals; the order is too strong for that for any individual. There is no emancipation of the individual to the degree to which you have that emancipation in Athens. Athens, on the other hand, is threatened by individuals and[24] [takes] measure[s] to counter the threat. That is exactly the opposite. The emancipation of the individual makes possible the criminal individual, and of course the interesting problem is the criminal in high places. You must also have observed that when Themistocles tells the story of these two crimes, impossible crimes—you must not forget that they did not betray Sparta to Athens or vice versa, but betrayed the Greeks to the Persians—Thucydides does not say a word of condemnation. That is also interesting. You know that is the great phenomenon of his reticence. And we must figure out what these stories convey, and we are not left without guidance because there are other stories, and our suggestions which we have on the basis

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[xvii] The passage that Strauss has in mind, in which Themistocles misleads the Lacedaemonians concerning the Athenians' building of their wall, is 1.91-92.

[xviii] Thucydides 1.93.

[xix] Vyacheslav M. Molotov (1890-1986), Old Bolshevik, rose to prominence under Stalin and as Foreign Minister signed the notorious nonaggression pact of 1939 with his German counterpart Joachim von Ribbentrop. Ousted from the Praesidium by Khrushchev in 1957, his life was spared: he held minor positions in remote locations until 1961 and lived in obscurity thereafter.

of a particular story are refuted by other stories so that we gradually may reach the elaboration which is in accordance with Thucydides's view.

One could find, however, that his abstention from judgment on Pausanias and Themistocles is particularly strange, because he begins the history—and in a way he preserves the history to the greatest degree possible—as the history of the cities as the actors, these collectives as the actors. And this contains [25]a morality of its own; you know, that the city is the authoritative jury and there is no higher standard than the existence, the power, and the glory of the *polis*. If one says "imperialism," one must at least add that this imperialism has a morality of its own. And the difficulty is only this: Is it possible in the long run and consistently to say that the city is above right, and to say that the individual is not above right? That is implicated, however, at the beginning, and the Themistocles story comes up on a larger scale later in the story of Alcibiades. You know, this is the beautiful picture that he draws of Athens, the key figures: Themistocles, Pericles, and Alcibiades. In Pericles, perfect harmony between the gifted individual and the city, and Pericles is of course free from any tincture of treason. But the two wing figures show the difference, and in a way Pericles is indeed the greatest miracle that he could do it. And[26] [Thucydides] wrote that Pericles was never ostracized. Never ostracized.[xx] He got into troubles, he was fined, we have seen that, but Pericles somehow could manage. But that he had to manage all the time, that was the problem of Athens. There was no such necessity for the Spartans.

But to come back to the point which I said: no judgment. This is, I think, a point which we will take up later on in another context. Thucydides's abstention from judgment has also this reason—or rather, if you want to know why Thucydides abstains ordinarily from judgment, I say: Look at the characters of Thucydides who judge. Are they the nice people or the not-nice people? Now if you take the case in the third book of Cleon and Diodotus, here the nice man speaks as a simple power politician: No, don't kill these people. Of course we could do it, but it is not practical, imprudent. Cleon says: They have committed a crime, they must be punished. He is the accuser.[xxi] And there is already an[27] [indication] of this in the difference between Archidamus and the Ephor in the first book. There is something in the danger of punitiveness which can so easily accompany justice [which] is the reason for abstaining from judgment or for appearing to be indifferent to justice. That is a point which we must also keep in mind. But I think I have been very unjust to you, sir, who wanted to speak some time ago.

Student: In chapter 118, I wonder if there isn't a question that is raised there—no, it's not in 118, in 138—about Themistocles's death. He says there that some think that he took his own life and died by poison because he was unable to fulfill what he had promised to the king. And I wondered if this isn't in some way an excuse for Themistocles, to excuse him from the accusation of being a traitor.

[xx] In fact Thucydides nowhere writes this, although he does stress in 2.65 that Pericles was always able to compose his differences with the people.

[xxi] Strauss refers here to the Mytilenian Debate (Thucydides 3.36-48).

LS: Oh no, you have very lax principles.[xxii]

Student: My argument is based once more on Plutarch, who in giving the life of Themistocles does definitely point out that Themistocles never accomplished that which he promised to the king—

LS: Yes, but you cannot—even if the stories of Plutarch are true, we cannot use them for the interpretation of Thucydides. By the way, in addition, Thucydides says "they say." He does not identify himself with that report.

Student: He says the opposite, doesn't he, that disease was the real cause of his death?

LS: Yes, quite true. Very good. Thucydides said, literally translated, that "having fallen sick, he ended his life."[xxiii] Already it is possible that a man who is very sick will commit suicide . . . He certainly doesn't identify himself with the assertion that Themistocles couldn't deliver the goods. It is possible, according to Thucydides, that Themistocles thought that he could—well, he had learned Persian. Not every ambassador learned the language of the people that he goes with, you know, and Themistocles was an ambassador which took the trouble.

Student: It seems to me that there is a different amount of justice, one might say a different situation regarding justice, in the curse that Sparta blamed Athens for and the curse that Athens blamed Sparta for. It may be that Athens had promised Cylon and his compatriots safe conduct, and then broke their promise. Whereas Sparta, in the death of Pausanias, was revenging on him for—

LS: But the issue [in both cases] is the crime against sacred right: the disregard of the right of asylum. The Spartans were of course more clever; they did not openly transgress: they killed someone who was sitting on the altar, but he didn't die there.

Student: When the Athenians reply, they mention two curses. There is the first one which is as always whenever the helots are mentioned, they are just—everyone knows that the Spartans would beat the helots all the time. But there is an exactly parallel case where they promised these helots in large numbers that they would be safe, and when they came out they killed them too—an exactly parallel case which is mentioned in only one short sentence which is the first part of the accusation which the Athenians made. The Themistocles story, which is given a big buildup in several pages, is just tacked on to it.

LS: Let me have a look at it. Where is it? 128.

Same Student: I think it is very interesting the differential treatment which Thucydides gives these two.

[xxii] The transcriber notes that there is "confusion and inaudibility."
[xxiii] Thucydides 1.138. Hobbes translates as follows: "But falling sick he ended his life."

LS: Yes, this is also interesting because he brings it up with the fact that in the Spartans' minds there was a connection between this impious act and the earthquake. And what conclusion do you draw? In other words, that the Athenians had greater complaints on these grounds than the Spartans.

Same Student: Once again, it is the old medicine which doesn't stink. But I had the feeling that Thucydides could smell it in spite of all the time that had passed.

LS: The point which you make is interesting. I would draw this conclusion: that very ironically in this respect the Athenians have a better record than the Spartans. We should expect that the old-fashioned pious Spartans would have a much better record in sacred matters than the Athenians have. But the Spartans can discover only the very old story of Cylon, whereas the Athenians can discover two more recent incidents. That also I think would be the point. They have two, not only one. That is good, very good.

Now we must say a few words about the last section, 139 to 146. The main event there is of course Pericles's speech—the first time that Pericles himself appears. Let us read the beginning of the speech, 140.

Reader:
"Men of Athens, I am still not only of the same opinion not to give way to the Peloponnesians (notwithstanding I know that men have not the same passions in the war itself which they have when they are incited to it but change their opinions with the events), but also I see that I must now advise the same things or very near to what I have before delivered. And I require of you with whom my counsel shall take place that if we miscarry in aught, you will either make the best of it, as decreed by common consent, or if we prosper, not to attribute it to your own wisdom only."

LS: "Your own wisdom only"—the "only" must be dropped. In other words, "Either you lay claim to having participated in this decision—[and] then you must also make the necessary effort—but if you do not make the necessary effort and my plan succeeds, don't claim that you have had any part in the deliberation." He begins with the statement: "I remain always with my *gnome*,[xxiv] my plan remains always the same—firm." There is a connection, I believe, between this point [and one] which is repeated later on in other speeches of Pericles: the firm Pericles, in contrast with the human beings—[the word] "men"[28] [is] a bit too narrow, because in Greek that [term, *andrēs*,] is the opposite [of *anthrōpoi* or "human beings"].[xxv] He is, as it were, more than human; he has more than human firmness. The plan, the thought, is firm: rest, unchanging in the midst of change. Everything changes around it, but his plan, his thought, is unchanging. This is a question

[xxiv] A word with a wide range of meaning:"Judgment," "verdict," or (as Hobbes renders it) [settled] "opinion."

[xxv] Strauss refers to the opposition in Greek between men in the full or true sense (manly men) (*andres)* and mere human beings (of whichever sex) (*anthrōpoi*). In fact, in the present passage Pericles addresses his audience as neither of these but rather as *Athēnaioi,* Athenians, and it is this that Hobbes renders as "men of Athens."

which we will take up later on another occasion: the fundamental distinction which he makes at the beginning between rest and unrest. And rest seems to be the higher [of the two]. And that appears on the very highest level in the phenomenon of true thought, which as such is unchanging but related to change of course, because there is true thought about change. You see, it is a kind of return of rest to unrest, and I think a symbol of that is naval power, because in naval power the restful man from which the power starts masters unrest, and therefore it is no accident that it is the naval power which is the intellectual power. But we will bring more evidence[29] [of] this later on.

Pericles says here also that Sparta is the aggressor: they were not willing to wait to find out whether the Athenians would make reasonable concessions; whether the Athenians were not in the right in the case of Potidaea, Megara, and so on.

Student: Don't they make the concessions at the end of the speech?

LS: No, no concessions. But whether or not the Athenians were in the right in these matters, whether the Athenians were not entitled to make this Megarian edict and to make the alliance with Corcyra and so on—. And then he describes the situation, why Athens had chances to win, clear chances to win: the Peloponnesians are farmers, chiefly; they cannot engage in long wars, they cannot be far away from home for a long time. Also, of course, their lack of unity: they don't have an alliance—no central government—whereas Athens has[30] one. Pericles seems to compare the enemies to a kind of ruler democracy which delegates no authority to the magistrates, an old-fashioned thing[31]. That he doesn't say explicitly, but it goes through this as well as the other speeches. Athens is on the top: modern, *technē*, art; and especially, of course, the great arts pertaining to the navy. Just as the same point will come up at the beginning of the funeral speech. In two or three generations Athens has risen from almost nothing to the peak. And the Athenians only have to be sensible, a bit sensible, and they are bound to win the war. And the reason why Athens is superior is its modernity. The danger to Athens is only the Athenians' own mistakes: their eagerness for unnecessary dangers, for unnecessary acquisition, a theme which he will also take up in the other speech.

For the understanding of the sequel it is important to know that the war has not yet begun; the decision is simply a decision to [go to] war, a unilateral decision on the part of the Peloponnesian League that the Athenians had broken the treaty. But they had not made any use of the provisions of the peace treaty on how to proceed in case of alleged breach of the treaty. The war begins; the treaty has[32] sixteen more years [to run], or fourteen at least, [so] the treaty is technically broken by the Peloponnesians. And to that extent that is very strange that Athens, who is morally the aggressor, is in fact the attacked party. And that will have great consequences for Spartan morale; they have an uneasy conscience because this argument—if you don't stop them now it will be too late—may be a sound political argument but it is not sound enough for [such][33] tolerant and law-abiding people as the Spartans were. Now the Spartans are no angels—we have found enough evidence for that—but they were in this respect more conscientious than the Athenians were. That comes out in the sequel. And the Athenians are . . . the peace is broken by the impossible action of the Thebans, with which the second book opens.

Student: This is something which has never been taken up and which I was curious about: the general question of propaganda. In the earlier section, in the Corcyraean affair in the difficulties they had with Corinth, Corinth took some of the Corcyraean—I don't know if I remember this quite rightly—Corinth took some of the Corcyraean oligarchy whom they had captured in one of their battles and treated them very well with the intention that they would return them, and they would be pro-Corinthian; later on they do this and provoke sedition. Another case which you brought up earlier that has to do with propaganda is [the] notion of Sparta being the deliverer or liberators of Greece, which Brasidas, as Thucydides points out, uses to his great advantage later in the war. We notice [that] the Peloponnesians are very successful on this account. This question of propaganda, we haven't raised it during—

LS: Yes, but we have raised it all the time, but we have just not called it by this quasi-scientific term, when we make a distinction between true and alleged causes. And why do people use alleged causes? That[34] is perhaps a bit more subtle than the word "propaganda" is, because they also have to convince themselves of the rightness of the cause. You know, this notion that it is done only by cold-blooded fellows in order to deceive others may be an extreme case. There may also be the case where people must convince themselves, and that shades into other cases where the people who make the so-called propaganda believe it.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: In other words, as [with] many of the other words that we use, that is at best a question mark designating a kind of movement ,it is not an understanding of that. But when you speak of propaganda, you imply today that you have a part of it.

Same Student: I'm not sure I understand that.

LS: If people speak of propaganda, they say Lasswell and the many people who follow him.[xxvi]

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Sure, what does that mean? I think this notion started following from the First World War—I mean this notion, not the fact—when certain very exaggerated reports [circulated] about German atrocities committed in Belgium. Now that the Germans did not behave very nicely, you know, was perfectly clear, to say nothing of the breach of the contract—Belgium was, after all, neutral—but it was surely that there were all sorts of pictures shown of hacked-up fingers of children, you know that kind of thing, which were probably habitually shown but not true. And so propaganda took on the meaning of just lying in order to create indignation against the enemy. That is surely one case; that

[xxvi] Strauss refers to the prominent American political scientist Harold D. Lasswell (1902-1978). During World War II he had been assigned by the U.S. government to study German propaganda and gained a reputation as the leading authority on the subject.

happens, and it is not limited to the First or Second World Wars, it happens at all times. But the alleged causes—that is the broader phenomenon, you know, a broader phenomenon, and there are also cases where the people might very scrupulously not say anything which they do not believe, and we must keep this whole spectrum in front of us. These terms inevitably induce one to narrow the thing terribly; that is the reason why I am so afraid of them. And especially, even if we take this distinction between alleged and true causes—Thucydides himself indicates that—the true cause: Athens' rising power. And what about these specific things, Corcyra and Potidaea? Are they simply being said by the Corinthians in order to get Sparta into the war? Or are they not things in themselves which induce the Spartans to become ever more convinced of the fact that Athens' power is rising, rising, rising, and if we do not stop it—you know one has to go into the thing.

By the way, there was one point which occurred to me which I should have made in connection with this, too. If Thucydides says that the truest cause is the least visible cause[35]—that he says at the end of chapter 23[36]—and when you go on and see the seemingly manifest and open causes, Corcyra and Potidaea, and then we come to the true cause, the Athenian empire, we make another observation which can be stated as follows. The truest cause, i.e., the least visible cause, is the earlier, because the Athenian empire was earlier than Corcyra and Potidaea. Now we have then this situation. The truest cause is equal to the invisible cause, equal to the earliest. But that means then, of course, that this story should go here [LS points to a diagram on the board], in the first twenty-three chapters, containing a cause still earlier then the Athenian empire—the beginnings of civilization, we can say. They contain the least visible cause, as Thucydides emphasizes all the time—you know, that is forgotten, but the truest cause. This is Thucydides's clue that the divine law, in the sense in which it is ordinarily believed in—established by the gods, and so on—is not true. This is a negative answer but of course a crucially important answer which is underlying the whole book. And the question then is, for Thucydides: Since manifestly the people who speak of divine right, divine vengeance, say something which is not untrue, how can he understand it? He doesn't deny it; that would be very simple. But what is the mechanism by virtue of which the injustice of cities leads to destruction? And I think we can provisionally say that . . . it has dissolved the bond between the *polis* and the individual. And then you get Alcibiades. Or you can get also the Athenian *demos*, which is [in] a very tough[37] [situation] and yet does not have the nerve to leave Alcibiades in command of the army and navy in Sicily, but because some *hermai*[xxvii] are destroyed in Athens, calls him back and forces Alcibiades, as it were, to become a traitor to Athens, to go over to Sparta to ruin them. That is what I think Thucydides is thinking of, but I am perfectly willing to learn, because, as I say, how this circle described by Thucydides looks at every point, I still don't see. Only one thing I would take for granted: he neither accepts the traditional Greek beliefs, and I think there is no one today who would assert that—sixty years ago, or eighty years ago, a very good editor of Thucydides, a German editor, still believed that Thucydides was intelligent, of course very intelligent, but fundamentally simply [a] traditional Greek believer—a gentleman like Archidamus, say. Today I do not see a single writer who believes that.

[xxvii] English *herms,* boundary markers in the form of images of the god Hermes, the defacement of which was therefore a sacrilege (Thucydides 6.27ff.).

Today there are many people who say the contrary: he was just like the sophists, but much more intelligent than the sophists, but fundamentally in this position: there is no natural right, and that is it. His standard is power. Surely that doesn't work, but to draw the precise lines, that is difficult.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Of course not. That is something for which I should be severely spanked. But I used that only as a provisional statement.

Same Student: No, I don't mean that. It only comes out later on that when Pausanias grew insolent, as he says in chapter 95, he wasn't acting as a Spartan commander but that he had already gone out as a private person. What do you think the reason is that somehow by not mentioning it you would almost think that Pausanias there is still acting as a Spartan general?

LS: I simply have no answer to that. I did not observe that. But I think you are right regarding your facts. I will try to think about it. Is there anyone who will make the situation easier for me by asserting that his facts are not right?

Student: I suspect it.

LS: I see. Only out of courtesy, or have you better reasons? Because actually, really, one can[not] be very sure whether any statement, merely factual and part of a long story and therefore of no intrinsic interest, is not very interesting. That is always the difficulty.

Same Student: We could find it out very quickly by reading chapter 94 and a few sentences in chapter 95:

> In the meantime was Pausanias, the son of Cleombrotus, sent from Lacedaemon commander of the Grecians with twenty galleys out of Peloponnesus, with which went also thirty sail of Athens, besides a multitude of other confederates, and making war on Cyprus subdued the greatest part of the same; and afterwards, under the same commander, came before Byzantium, which they besieged and won.[xxviii]

> But Pausanias, being now grown insolent, both the rest of the Grecians and especially the Ionians who had newly recovered their liberty from the king, offended with him, came to the Athenians and requested them for consanguinity's sake to become their leaders and to protect them from the violence of Pausanias.[xxix]

LS: I think I see now your mistake. Later on he was sent out again in a private capacity. That was later. That was later.

[xxviii] Thucydides 1.94.
[xxix] Thucydides 1.95.

Student: It appears from chapter 95.

LS: Now I suggest this procedure, given the fact that it is already very late, if you are convinced, still convinced after—

Session 4: no date
Book 2, Chapters 1-51

Leo Strauss: Part of our speaker's paper[i] has reminded me of a remark made by Mr. Morrison toward the end of class last time. I must repeat it because I did not quite understand what he meant. He explained it to me after class, you know this beautiful story about the curses, the violations of the sacred law by the Athenians and by the Spartans. You may have understood it when he said it in class, but I understood it only afterward. The point is this. The Spartans started that, you know, started this whole issue, demanding from the Athenians that they comply with the repentance, or whatever you call it, for the breach of a sacred law regarding this Cylon. And then the Athenians replying—replying, they never would have thought of such a thing—with two such things. They beat the Spartans at their own game, and nothing makes the Spartans more ridiculous than this story. They brought in a wholly far-fetched and irrelevant issue, and the Athenians are so clever that they can do even that better than the Spartans. Is this not a fair statement of what you meant? Well, and Mr. Morrison explained to me that he was enabled to see that because he has a certain loathing for the Spartans. May I mention that?

Now here we have the opposite case. We have here the case of our speaker who has a very great liking for Spartan discipline and a correspondent loathing for Pericles, and this enabled him to see the spurious character of the funeral speech which I believe is ordinarily not seen. I don't know the literature very well, but the only reference to that which I remember is in Zimmern's book *The Greek Commonwealth*;[ii] as an appendix he prints a translation of the funeral speech with footnotes stating the contradictions, ironies, and so on and so on. But I am speaking from memory; you would have to look that up for yourself. My criticism of our speaker I could state as follows: The speaker speaks fundamentally from a Socratic point of view, because I believe you would not identify yourself one hundred percent with the Spartans? But look at Socrates: in spite of his sternness or whatever you call it, he had a considerable sympathy for Alcibiades, who was even worse than Pericles. I don't deny that what you intended is correct and what you sensed is correct, but I believe it is more complex. One has to draw a much broader arc, you know. The points which you discern are there, and some of what you said about Pericles's ambiguous posture toward law is I think very well taken, but I don't think that your arguments are sufficient and even necessary. I will explain it when I come to that.

You were very wise in concentrating on the funeral speech, because that is indeed the event in this particular assignment. What you said about this thing—the speech is more brilliant than the deeds—that is a very good remark of much broader bearing than for this

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[i] Strauss refers to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] Alfred Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth: Politics and Economics in Fifth-Century Athens* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1911).

particular assignment. When you read the whole history, this is not an account of brilliant deeds. There are stretches, such as Brasidas's action in the fourth book, which is certainly wonderful but it is wholly indecisive. He has some splendid victories, but they lead nowhere because Cleon had done something equally brilliant in Sphacteria which cancelled it out. The outcome was a peace which was surely not a victory for Sparta. The most brilliant thing in the *History* is the Sicily story, and that was the most brilliant disaster, or at least the most brilliantly described disaster that ever happened. The brilliance is indeed in the speeches, and especially in the funeral speech. That is quite true. Now this must be linked up with another character[istic]—first of Pericles's speech. I mean, when you read Thucydides, and especially the later books, you get this account, "in the same summer they did this" and "in the same summer they did that," many of these things were wholly inconsequential. I mean, unless you are fanatically interested in Athenian or Greek history of the fifth century, it cannot be interesting. I mean, it is boring, yes, but this is not the fault of Thucydides, of course, that Thucydides made the wrong selections or that he didn't distinguish between the important and the unimportant, but he did this advisedly. I overstate it. The Peloponnesian War is the boring war in contrast to the Persian War: over in four battles, brilliant victory; and what an objective, the liberation of Greece from the Persians! Whereas here the objective, the liberation of Greece from the Athenians, is much more ambiguous and, as I said, it is achieved in this extremely boring, squalid manner, in spite of certain heroic moments. But what does this mean?

That can ultimately be traced, as our speaker has seen, to Pericles's policy. You know, in the famous strategical discussions prior to the First World War, which[1] [occurred] chiefly in Germany and France, there was this discussion: What is the real war? What later on came to be called the lightning war [*Blitzkrieg*]. The classic example is the battle of Cannae. Hannibal defeated the Romans: one battle in which the hostile army is destroyed. That was the model for the German general staff, who did not consider the fact, however, that the battle of Cannae took place after the beginning of the Second Punic War and it lasted seventeen more years, and at the end Hannibal was defeated. But that I disregard. But the alternative is a war in which you tire out your opponent, you let him run on, you know, just as to some extent that was the case in the static war on the Western Front. I mean, that is a dull war, dull and squalid, but can be of course strategically and politically a good war. It could be—that was not the case in the First World War.

Now this conception which Pericles had: "We will defend our empire," that is the meaning of that war. "Let them come in and let them ram their heads, so to speak, against the walls of Athens; we are sure that they will never do that. And we will do the necessary things with our navy, but there is no necessity for any brilliant exploits. Just let them ram their heads against us." This is, however, differently understood, and I think that we must take it into consideration: a victory of intelligence over imagination, if I may say so. You know, there are not the brilliant exploits which strike the imagination, nothing "dramatic"; very prosaic, intelligent. I think that is a point where Thucydides has sympathy with Pericles: the same sobriety which he shows, you know, in his Archaeology, the opposing of the poets and the poets' magnifying. He recognized [himself] in this sobriety of Pericles's war policy.

All the more striking, of course, is it if this victory of intelligence on the level of war policy has to be contrasted with unsatisfactory intelligence on a broader plain. In the praise of Pericles in chapter 65, which we will discuss next time, Thucydides praises Pericles's foresight, qualifying that immediately. [By] foresight I mean foresight in regard to the war. In this limited question—How can Athens, circumstanced as she is, win this war?—Pericles was superb; but[2] [those are] also his limits. And the limits come [out], I think, very well[34] in this speech. And what you said—that this is in a way an absolutely atrocious self-praise, if you are ruthless in your analysis—is fully correct. I mean, that Plato wrote a funeral speech which is a kind of comment on Thucydides's funeral speech—*Menexenus*, the short dialogue which would have been regarded by all nineteenth-century classical scholars as spurious, not as the work of Plato, but for the fact that it is protected, as they say, by Aristotle. Aristotle quotes it, so they couldn't possibly deny its authentic authorship. Now this is of course[5] much[6] clear[er] parody on funeral speeches, and the remark is made there: Nothing is easier than to praise Athenians in front of Athenians. And I think you discern this thought in Thucydides himself quite rightly. Whether you did not do some injustice to some other things in this speech is another matter.

Yes, I think one can say regarding this very fact that on the whole in the *History* the most brilliant are the speeches, not events or deeds, [that it] draws our attention to the speeches as distinguished from the deeds, and these speeches are however all practical speeches. Even if it is a speech of praise, it nevertheless has a practical political objective. But the last step of course is then, if you recognize the inadequacy of the speeches, the practical political speeches, to realize that there may be a speech which is not practical—and that is of course Thucydides's own speech. That, very roughly, is I think what happens here. But we must now turn to the details.

We must begin with the beginning of the second book, and there is only—we must remind ourselves of one point which came out in the first book and which would deserve much more careful attention, but I have to leave it now at this. The Athenians compelled the Spartans to wage war against them. That is what Thucydides says. To that extent the Spartans are perfectly justified. But what about the Athenians? Were they simply irresponsible imperialists? No? The Athenians also acted on their compulsion. They were compelled by fear of the Persians to wall their city and to build a navy. But then the Athenians say, not Thucydides, that they were compelled by fear plus honor and profit to transform the alliance into an empire and to lord it over their former allies. Now that is what the Athenians say, not Thucydides, and we must use our heads and see that there is a great difference between the compulsion exercised by fear and the compulsion exercised by honor and profit. I mean, if the compulsion exercised by honor and profit is recognized, then every crime is permissible, because I think you will hardly find any crime which cannot be traced to this kind of compulsion. This, in other words, amounts to an admission that Athenian expansionism was not justifiable on the grounds of right. That doesn't completely settle the issue, but it is surely an important consideration.

Now Thucydides calls this fear of the Spartans the truest cause, and he distinguishes it from ostensible causes. What are the ostensible causes? That is not quite clear. I can give you the simple answer, but you will see immediately that this is only an indication and not an answer: Corcyra and Potidaea. These are the ostensible causes. But that is not an answer, for this reason: because we don't know whether Athens acted against the treaty by allying herself with Corcyra, or by keeping down Potidaea, by[7] [besieging] Potidaea. So the only ostensible cause clearly stated is that taken from sacred law, and that is of course mere eyewash. The true ostensible cause is: Did the Athenians break the treaty or not? And this question is not explicitly discussed in the first book. It is not explicitly discussed. Now I believe that the beginning of the second book makes it perfectly clear that [it was] not the Athenians [who] were guilty of the breach of treaty, but the Peloponnesian side, [with] the Theban invasion of Plataea. And this leads to the result that from the point of view of justice, the Spartans were guilty, not the Athenians. This is played down by Thucydides but is I think made nevertheless sufficiently clear. Now you could of course say, and I believe that is what most interpreters say, that Thucydides was an intelligent man and was not impressed with this legal spiderweb, and he saw only the massive political fact.

But the question is whether that is really adequate, whether Thucydides's thought is not broader, more subtle than that. And I think it is. I would state it as follows: granted that the Athenians are right in what they say in Sparta, that the only natural right is the right of the stronger, there is no natural right to speak of—in other words, let us say there is no natural right. But men cannot live, men cannot live without something like right. Let me call this which is like right "trust." Without trust men cannot live. Precisely if there is not natural right, and if there are no gods avenging breaches of the natural right, then if all right is conventional—but this conventional right is terribly important, and this conventional right means, as the word conventional indicates, that you trust the promises of the other fellow, or for that matter of the other city. I believe that it is not an accident that the first three speeches begin in Greek with these three words: justice, necessity, trust. There is a conflict between justice and necessity, and if this conflict is really clear, necessity will always win. I am sure that this is what Thucydides means, but there is also—we must not forget another thing—the absolute necessity of trust. No individual, and not even any state, can live without something really trusted, and that means fidelity to covenants. And the Athenians strangely had this fidelity, and the Spartans had not. The strangest fact about the matter is that the Athenians never avail themselves of this tremendous morale booster, of this argument, "We didn't break the treaty." How do we explain that? After all, that would be an excellent propaganda weapon. I think it has something to do with the noble side of the Athenians. That would have gone against their frankness—a certain generosity—to avail themselves of a reasoning which they did not fundamentally recognize. The Spartans surely would have made the utmost use of it, of this we can be sure.

Now we come then to the beginning of the second book, and here we have the clear beginning of the war, the clear breach of the peace by the Thebans' action against Plataea. That is[8] not very far from Athens in a westerly direction, the region called Boeotia, of which Thebes was the greatest city, and Plataea [was] a smaller city allied

with Athens, because Plataea was democratically ruled, and there was a general inclination of the democratically ruled cities towards Athens and of the oligarchically ruled cities toward Sparta. Now this was[9] [clearly an] unjust action. Now then something happens which is very interesting. The Plataeans, originally surprised, rally soon and they throw out the Thebans and they make a hundred eighty prisoners. And then the Thebans are trying to destroy the Plataeans outside the walls of the city. Then the Plataeans say: Let our people alone and we will keep these one hundred eighty men and will exchange them. After the rural Plataeans have entered the city, the Plataeans kill the one hundred eighty Theban prisoners. The only issue raised among these two people is: Did the Plataeans swear that they would keep them alive, or did they only promise it? If they only promised it, that doesn't mean a thing, that is the notion, but the Plataeans clearly acted very nastily. Very nastily. And because after all they got their part of the bargain, and they didn't give it—and that appears, if you would read more carefully, especially in the sixth chapter: you would see that the Plataeans had a bad conscience from the very beginning. They inform the Athenians of the fact that they had taken these prisoners after they had already killed them, and not saying a word about the killing.[iii] And so the Athenians send a messenger: Keep them alive. But it was already too late.

But this has great consequences in the third book, when Plataea is razed by the victorious Spartans and Thebans, partly caused by the Plataeans' disgraceful conduct in this particular place, occasion. But the broader thing is this: the Thebans committed a clear act of injustice, and this is somehow wiped out by the unjust conduct of the Plataeans. You see, that is one beautiful illustration why it is impossible to get full justice in international affairs. There is always a complicated reckoning on both sides, and if you would like to punish each malefactor there you would not find enough executioners.

The interesting thing regarding Thucydides, however, is this, and that, I think, is a very good example. Thucydides doesn't pass judgment on the deed of the Thebans, or on that of the Plataeans, except by saying that the treaty was clearly broken by what happened in Plataea. And that is of course obvious. This means also that the treaty was not clearly broken by what happened in Corcyra or any other former occasion. Thucydides abstains from judgment, you see; he compels us to judge. Not out of indifference to injustice, but out of justice, just as (I mentioned this before) the nasty people in Thucydides are the ones who talk all the time of justice. And it is interesting to see that justice (and it comes out very clearly here) is related to covenants—say, fidelity to solemn covenants—because that has become the issue. Did the Plataeans merely vaguely informally promise, or did they formally promise, did they swear? But that is the crucial standard. Human life is impossible without mutual trust, trust in solemn promises. Precisely if there is no natural right, the conventional right is necessary if there is to be civilized life, and the conventional right is then by nature necessary. That is not the same thing as natural right but it is a substitute for it.

Now in the sequel Thucydides makes a remark to which our speaker referred: the enthusiasm for war in the whole of Greece. There hadn't been an interesting big war for

[iii] Strauss misrecalls the sequence of events in 2.6; the Thebans had sent this messenger prior to the execution of the captives.

generations, and these young boys were itching for a fight. Of course they didn't know what they were itching for, but it is perfectly understandable that they were itching. So it is a strange thing that the very absence of war makes men eager for war—the great problem of the future, if there is a future. You know William James's problem of the moral substitute for war—that's it.[iv] In the same context, in chapter 8 Thucydides notes[10] the increasing oracles and signs. You know, people had become apprehensive—the uncertainty of the future. And in this very same context he mentions the universal hatred of Athens, this universal hatred of Athens which seems to absorb completely any sense of [the] injustice of the action of the Thebans. Athens the tyrant city—and this is indeed in a way the most obvious cause, as distinguished from the hidden cause. The Peloponnesian War is fought to liberate Greece from Athens, as the Persian War was fought to liberate Greece from the Medes.

Yet this simple view, that this is a[11] war against a tyrant city, is corrected especially by the speech of the Spartan king, Archidamus, in chapter 11. If the case against Athens was so clear, Archidamus would not have[12] [shown] such[13] great hesitation. This is a strange speech of a commander, although he doesn't address the soldiers but only the commanding officers. But it is surely not a speech inspiring offensive action. He warns all the time against any mistakes they might make in enemy country; in other words, the supreme law of war is caution, caution, caution, and never attack, which shows that he is surely not the best leader for this situation. There is a speech of Pericles in chapter 13, which is however only reported, an indirect speech, and it only restates Pericles's general view of how the Athenians should conduct themselves. The main point is: Give up Attica. Withdraw within the walls and let the Spartans do their worst to the Attic countryside; that has no effect whatever on the outcome of the war.

And now there comes the description of the Athenian evacuation of the countryside and their retirement within the walls in [chapters] 14 to 17. Thucydides calls this an "upheaval," a "commotion"—the same word which he had used in the second chapter, you know, when he introduced his overall categories [of] motion and rest. This is another motion, and what motion means is made very clear here: it is a destructive thing, the destruction of the old traditional way of life of the Athenian country people, the break with ancient customs. And here that is very strange, and we must keep that in mind, for in the funeral speech, the Athenians—Athens is an unusually ancient city. This most modern city is at the same time the most ancient city, and there is a difficulty implied in this very fact.

Thucydides discusses in this context an oracle in chapter 17. Very roughly what he says is this: the misfortune is not a consequence of the crime, but the crime is a consequence of the misfortune. This Athenian antiquity—old Athens, [14][the Athens of Pallas Athena]—is contrasted tacitly with the modern progressive Athens characterized by daring and art which is of recent origin, after the Persian Wars. All the great recent progress of Athens would not have been possible but for Athens' antiquity. Why is that so? Why must Athens have her roots so deep in the soil if she is to become independent

[iv] James's actual phrase was the "moral equivalent of war," the title of an essay based on a speech of the same name delivered at Stanford University in 1906.

of the soil and mistress of the sea? Well, there must be cohesion. The Athenians must know in their bones that they are Athenians, that they belong together, and this is not a matter of a short time.

Student: One question on this: he demonstrates that the original nature of Athens was—he draws a picture which is almost parallel to the actual state of the empire. In other words, small towns strung out . . . And he[v] uses force to create a [. . .] he uses force, much the same way the empire was created. And yet at the present time Athens as a city is considered as a whole, yet the kind of actions which gave Athens this unity are precisely the kind of actions—

LS: Yes, but could you not say this, that what Minos did—a contemporary of Theseus, almost a contemporary, when he destroyed the pirates—that was also a man animated not necessarily by pure justice but also concerned with having greater power? So what had happened in the beginnings when foundations had to be laid so that there could be something like civilization, that would not be a civilized method. That would be a different story. The cohesion of the originally separate villages into one big city takes a long time, or requires oldness. And yet Athens' recent imperial enterprise flies in the face of that. This large-scale injustice, if we can call it that way, the Athenian imperialism, presupposes more elementary justice, a sense of right binding the Athenians together. The Spartan king counts on the lack of cohesion—you know, that is part of his war policy. He thinks that the Athenians will suffer most from the war, especially the Acarnanians,[vi] the subject of a comedy by Aristophanes: the most patriotic Athenians, Marathon fighters, and they were rural people and they suffered most. And he counts[15] [on the war to] act as a divisive force. This only illustrates the crucial importance of cohesion.

Student: I was a little confused, but I think I see clearly now, the [. . .]

LS: The enormous wealth of course comes only in the fifth century, only after the Persian War. In other words, Athens becomes important and powerful only after the Persian War. Thucydides makes perfectly clear the daring and the great objectives which came only after the Persian War.

Student: The Athenians were latecomers in that respect.

LS: By the way, that is confirmed by Aristotle in the seventh or eighth book of the *Politics*, where he speaks of the innovations in music in Athens—you know, in the education of children in music and things. The real progress was made after the Persian War, because the victory there had given the Athenians greater self-confidence, willing[ness] to change.[vii] I would say these two pieces of information I regard as more convincing than volumes of other information. That seems to have been the case. Athens was a latecomer. Well, in the history of philosophy that is quite manifest. The early

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[v] Presumably the reference is to Theseus (cf. Thucydides 2.15.1-2).
[vi] Not the Acarnanians, a people of northwesterm Greece (cf. Thucydides 2.102-103, 3.102-114), but the Acharnians were the refugees from a rural deme of Athens.
[vii] Aristotle, *Politics* 1341a25-32.

philosophy was in Ionia and in Sicily, but surely not in Athens. The first native philosopher was—Anaxagoras was a visitor; around the time of Pericles all kinds of eggheads assembled from all parts of Greece—but the first well-known Athenian philosopher was Socrates. There was one before, whose name I don't remember any more.[viii] So now we come to the funeral speech, and our speaker has said everything about a certain inappropriateness—the occasion was so little. How many were the fallen in that skirmish, twenty-four or so?

Student: Fifteen or so.[ix]

LS: Yes, a very small number and, I mean, never did so few get such a big funeral, if I may say so. It is of course somewhat cynical if you say that, but since they are dead, and even their relatives are dead so long a time ago, I think we do not act in an inhuman manner in making this comment.

Student: Is it not a fact that a funeral speech is a kind of a rite in which all kinds of things are said which might on the face of it be quite out of proportion with the occasion?

LS: Yes, but the question is simply—I could put it this way. Pericles is not just a conventional orator. You know? He must be able to transcend all improprieties which may be inherent in the custom. That would not be a sufficient justification. I mean, the strange fact remains that surely that was the only funeral speech during the Peloponnesian War which Pericles ever delivered—he died so soon—and he could have availed himself of this opportunity. So one may say that this was the last opportunity that Thucydides had to let us hear Pericles deliver a funeral oration. But still, we cannot be unmindful of the fact that there was a certain—you know, after the Sicilian expedition, the terrific bloodletting, it would have been, if one may say so, there would have been a better proportion between the dead and the speech. Thucydides gives an introduction to that speech in chapter 34, and he makes clear, and that is very important as we will see soon, that the funeral takes place according to the ancestral law. Now let us read chapter 35.

Reader:
Though most that have spoken formerly in this place have commended the
man that added—

LS: Now listen to that beginning: the first word is "the many"; "The many would have spoken." Now this implies a real contrast with "I." Them and I.

Reader:
"this oration to the law as honourable for those that die in the wars, yet to me
it seemeth sufficient that they who have showed their valour by action should

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[viii] Presumably Archelaus of Athens (originally from Miletus?), fl. fifth century BCE, reputed teacher of Socrates (cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, 1.2).
[ix] The reference must be to the cavalry skirmish reported at 2.22, but Thucydides says nothing more precise than that there were "a few of the Athenians (and their Thessalian allies) slain."

also by an action have their honour, as now you see they have, in this their sepulture performed by the state, and not to have the virtue of many hazarded on one to be believed as that one shall make a good or bad oration."

LS: What does he say in this beginning? I mean, what does he say about the institution which he confirms, as it were, by his present action? Is this the usual funeral speech? Very good. Let us make it one hundred percent clear. It is an unreasonable addition to the law by some individual, and that of course is in itself understandable in one way. After all, Pericles could say: He was individual, and I am individual, and I have as much right to my judgment as he has to his. As is said in Aristophanes's *Clouds* somewhere, "the man who made the original law, he was not a better man or brighter man than you and I. Why should we abide by his laws?"[x] But here of course it is not the lawgiver; he is just an individual.

Reader:
"For to speak of men in a just measure, is a hard matter; and though one do so, yet he shall hardly get the truth firmly believed. The favourable hearer and he that knows what was done will perhaps think what is spoken short of what he would have it and what it was; and he that is ignorant will find somewhat on the other side which he will think too much extolled, especially if he hear aught above the pitch of his own nature. For to hear another man praised finds patience so long only as each man shall think he could himself have done what somewhat of that hears.[xi] And if one exceed in their praises, the hearer presently through envy thinks it false. But since our ancestors have so thought good, I also, following the same ordinance—"

LS: Now please, let us be more literal: "Obeying and following the *law*."

Reader:
"must endeavor to be answerable to the desires and opinions of everyone of you as far forth as I can."[xii]

LS: Yes. Now look, this is not just an individual who added that rider that there should also be a funeral speech: it is the law which commands the funeral speech. So what he does at the beginning of this most solemn occasion is to criticize the law. That is an extraordinary thing. You sensed that. But here it is, I think, explicitly said. Only why does Hobbes use "ordinance" in his translation here? It is the same word. And that is in effect the law—whether it is fifty years old or two hundred fifty, I don't care. It was a solemn law, and Pericles, the highest in dignity, the highest representative of the city, questions that law. That is Athens; that is also the problem of Athens. I think one cannot emphasize this too strongly.

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[x] *Clouds* 1420-24.
[xi] In the original: "could himself have done somewhat of that he hears."
[xii] Thucydides 2.35.

There are other things, of course, in this chapter which would deserve attention. When you take this literally, one has the impression that if people are being praised for having died for their city or their country, that would make the hearers envious—I mean, as if this hasn't happened in all cities and all countries at all times. I mean that I don't deny that there are people who just run away or desert, but on the other hand it is not such a superhuman action. That is also a point which we have observed and which will come up later. Now the contrast between this and the remark of the Spartan king, Archidamus, in chapter 84 of this book is quite striking. You know that the Spartans do not regard themselves as wiser than the laws. Pericles manifestly does, and on such an occasion—quite striking.

Student: Isn't there something rather petty and querulous about beginning in this way? It focuses all the attention on him and what he says, for one thing.

LS: Yes, but you might also not forget this—that is true, but you must not also forget this, that we, reading it and trying to understand, bring out certain features which are not visible at the first glance. Let me put it this way. There are two images of Pericles—there are of course many more—but two of them, and one is that which every reader of Pericles of Thucydides gets and has got at all times: the great Athenian statesman, the marvelous speaker, and the other features. And then there is one view which appears only if one thinks more and is not simply overwhelmed by rhetoric and all of this, and then one sees that other, and one has to look at it. We have a good example which we have discussed at some length at the beginning of Plato's *Republic*: Cephalus, at first glance a simply nice old gentleman whom everyone would wish to have as a grandfather, an absolutely nice man. And when you read more carefully you see also—if you use X-rays, if I may say so—you see also how deceptive it is. He is also very nasty. That he is[16] [nicer] than most old men is easily granted, but that is not enough. You know, when he makes that nice remark that "we don't come any more to Athens because I am so old; wherever I go goes the family as a matter of course," to say nothing of some more slightly unpleasant features which he displays. You have the same here. Thucydides regarded it as important to say to most Athenians: Stick to Pericles! You could do infinitely worse. That is surely good advice, would you not admit that? But that does not mean that his moral imagination, that the ceiling of his moral imagination was constituted by Pericles. That is the point. Sure, there is something of that, and that is what our speaker had in mind when he said that if you read it carefully it boils down to the self-praise of the present Athenian generation. We are at the peak, and since the man who made that ultimately, who was the leader of that generation, was Pericles, it amounts to self-praise. There are other funny features. Now let us read the next chapter:

Reader:
"I will begin at our ancestors; being a thing both just and honest that to them first be given the honour of remembrance in this kind. For they, having been always the inhabitants of this region, by their valour have delivered the same to succession of posterity hitherto in the state of liberty. For which they deserve commendation, but our fathers deserve yet more—[xiii]

[xiii] Thucydides 2.36.

LS: "still more."

Reader:
for that besides what descended on them, not without great labour of their own they have purchased this our present dominion and delivered the same over to us that now are. Which in a great part also we ourselves that are yet in the strength of our age here present have enlarged and so furnished the city with everything, both for peace and war, as it is now all-sufficient in itself.

Now that is perfectly clear, the effect: the old generations here [LS gestures toward the floor]; the last generation here [he gestures further up]; and we are at the top [he gestures toward the ceiling].[xiv] There is of course a connection between the first chapter and the second chapter: the depreciation of the law, and the deprecation of the old, the ancestral. This chapter 36 must be considered especially also for the following reason: Did we ever come across such an assertion before, such a movement? The description of such a movement, did we ever see that?

Student: Well, in Thucydides's story of the war, building up from [the] horrible past—this was the greatest foe—

LS: The Archaeology, exactly. You see there is an amazing kinship between Pericles and Thucydides. We will find other traces of it, but there is also a very profound difference, a difference which will come out in the very funeral speech.

Student: When you refer to Thucydides, do you mean in the archaeology the ascent from political unrest to rest?

LS: Well, very simply, from primitive barbarism to present Greece.

Same Student: Or would this also refer to what the other gentleman just mentioned regarding the build-up to this, the greatest of all wars?

LS: Yes, but that would be highly improper that Pericles would say, you see: These boys are dead now and that is the wonderful consequence of what they have been doing all the time. I mean, that would not be proper in a funeral speech. No, no, but a very simple notion: a primitive savage past, a poor past and a rich present, that is identical. But we will see that it goes together with a great difference between the statesman and the historian.

Student: In the Archaeology there is a growth in justice as well as in power—the later Athenians were more just than the earlier ones—whereas Pericles only notes a growth in power and wealth. Is that right?

[xiv] The comments about Strauss's gestures are noted by the transcriber.

LS: Yes, that is good, but we will come to that. That will be in the passage, which is striking, where Thucydides almost goes out on a limb and says, "Herein you see the difference between me and Pericles," and people don't consider that. We will come to that later. The difficulty I think here is this: Soldiers die in all cities and tribes, so to say, in all times. You can't praise the bravery of a nomadic Scythian less than the bravery of an Athenian hoplite. Here Pericles does the only thing: the cause for which they died differs. In an important respect, it[17] [makes] a difference whether you die for Periclean Athens or for some primitive tribe, and therefore that is the center of the speech. But that is also the difficulty which Pericles has to overcome somehow. Read the next paragraph where you left off.

Reader:
The actions of war whereby all this was attained and the deeds or arms[xv] both of ourselves and our fathers in valiant opposition to the barbarians or Grecians in their wars against us, amongst you that are well acquainted with the sum, to avoid prolixity I will pass over. But by what institutions we arrived at this, by what form of government and by what means we have advanced—[xvi]

LS: "What regime and manners."

Reader:
the state to this greatness, when I shall have laid open this, I shall then descend to these men's praises. For I think they are things both fit for the purpose in hand and profitable to the whole company, both of citizens and strangers, to hear related.

LS: These three themes he indicates here. How does Hobbes translate the first? "Institution," I think. Yes. Well, a more or less cautious translation of that would be "pursuit," and then enlarged and used of especially the form of government or regime, and then manners. Now the manners are mentioned at least twice in this speech. They are mentioned twice, and in one case they are used in opposition to law. That is very interesting; in other words, manners appear to mean laws by that.[xvii] The first term doesn't occur at all anymore in the funeral speech, but in the first enumeration, "regime" is in the center, and with the regime he indeed begins. Now what does he say about the regime?

Reader:
We have a form of government not fetched by imitation from the laws of our neighboring states (nay, we are rather a pattern to others, than they to us) which, because in the administration it hath respect not to a few but to the multitude, is called a democracy. Wherein, though there[18] be an equality amongst all men in point of law for their private controversies, yet in conferring of dignities one man is preferred before another to public charge,

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[xv] In the original: "deeds of arms."
[xvi] Thucydides 2.36.
[xvii] Words and meaning uncertain.

and that according to the reputation not of his house but of his virtue, and is not put back through poverty for the obscurity of his person as long as he can do good service to the commonwealth. And we live not only free in the administration of the state but also one with another void of jealousy touching each other's daily course of life, not offended at any man for following his own humour, nor casting on any man censorious looks, which though they be no punishment, yet they grieve. So that conversing one with another for the private without offence, we stand chiefly in fear to transgress against the public and are obedient always to those that govern and to the laws, and principally to such laws as are written for protection against injury, and such unwritten as bring undeniable shame to the transgressors.[xviii]

LS: Yes, now this is the only passage on the regime, and that is of course one of the most famous passages about democracy at her best, and I don't [think] there is another statement from classical antiquity about democracy which is as illustrious and famous. Or am I mistaken? I mean, what would you find in the textbooks of a Western Civilization course, for example, except this? Is this not true? Am I mistaken? Because, after all, what Plato and Aristotle say is not praise of democracy. Which other statement could compare with this?

Student: I'm wondering if in fact this is praise of democracy, because the distribution of honor—the standard is not exactly—

LS: We will come to that. But still, compared with what Plato and Aristotle say—well, what does Aristotle say about democracy? The rule of the many?[19] And what does this mean, according to Aristotle?

Student: The rule of the poor.

LS: And hence?

Same Student: Liberty and license.

LS: No, no, the rule of the uneducated, not liberty and license. It is the opposite. I think that is much closer to the modern notion of democracy: democracy not as the equality of mere rights on the lowest level, but as equality of opportunity. That is the point which he makes. So there is something which corrects the merely legal equality, and that is the inequality based on esteem; and the consideration for esteem is virtue, so that they elect to the ruling offices the best men. So what he says in effect is that in one sense it is a democracy, but "in *name*," he says, and that means almost not in substance.[20] That that is the correct interpretation is proved by the fact that when Thucydides later on speaks about Athens under Pericles in the sixty-fifth chapter, he says the name was democracy, but in fact it was the rule of its first man, and best man. So in name it is a democracy; in fact it is an aristocracy. That is it: an aristocracy on a democratic basis.

Thucydides 2.37.1.

Now the next point. The first words of democracy were at all times, first: "equality." That has been discussed. There is equality, but the only sensible form of equality, equality of opportunity. And what is the other great word of democracy? "Liberty and freedom"? That comes in the following, and that approaches almost what people now call permissiveness. That is stated very nicely: We don't look like old censors and spinsters, and so on . . . We like fun and like other people to have fun.[xix] Yet he makes immediately clear: no license, obedient to law and rulers, we are very strict. Have you seen that? Now what does he mean by these laws which are given—and especially those laws which are given for the benefit of the wronged, those who have experienced injustice? In the *Athenian Constitution*, Aristotle mentions as among the three most democratic measures of Solon this one: that anyone who wished could take revenge on behalf of the wronged.[xx] Now what does this mean? I mean, who takes care of the wronged in our society?

Student: The state?

LS: Yes, but the state is too large.

Same Student: The public prosecutor?

LS: The public prosecutor, exactly. This institution didn't exist in Athens. And this was exactly what Solon called "he who wishes,"[21][*bouleutērios*]. But that took on a somewhat specific meaning in Pericles's time, as you would see if you would read Aristophanes's comedy *Plutus,* verses 898ff.[xxi] I mean, there were people who did this professionally, you know, not only like we do—we see someone driving through a red light, and we accuse him—but there were people who did this as a profession. They were known as the sycophants. You see, they could live very well[22] [off] that because there were quite a few wronged people of whom they could take care, you see, and I would not—Thucydides[xxii] had spoken before of the men without prestige, the poor fellows without prestige, obscure men who were nevertheless free to do something good to the city. I wonder if I should not take these two things together, that this is a kind of vindication of the institution of sycophancy as we see it in Athens: any unknown obscure fellow who thinks it is his duty to take care of the wronged could do this and was even encouraged by law to do that. I surely think we should consider that.

The connection between the[23] [first words] is perfectly clear: "equality" and "liberty," and liberty in the direction of easygoingness. I mean, the liberty is easygoingness—it is not license, that is clear. And now there is a perfectly easy transition to the next.

[xix] Although Strauss speaks of the point that he is about to repeat as "stated very nicely," he proceeds to offer his own reformulation rather than a citation of Thucydides.
[xx] *Athenian Constitution,* chap 9.
[xxi] Aristophanes presents a dialogue between a "just man" (*Dikaios*) and one of the "people who did this as a profession" to whom Strauss refers: a "sycophant" (*Sykophantēs*).
[xxii] Did Strauss mean to say that *Pericles* had spoken of such obscure individuals as could benefit the city as sycophants? He appears to refer to a possible (if by no means obvious) interpretation of 2.37.1.

Reader:
We have also found out many ways to give our minds recreation from labour by public institution of games and sacrifices for all the days of the year with a decent pomp and furniture of the same by private men, by the daily delight whereof we expel sadness. We have this farther by the greatness of our city that all things from all parts of the earth are imported hither, whereby we no less familiarly enjoy the commodities of all other nations than our own.[xxiii]

LS: By the way, if I remember well, someone made this point that there is a certain tension between this remark and the remark about Athens' absolute self-sufficiency which we read before, you know. But if you have to import from all the world, you are not self-sufficient. I don't know if that is good enough, but I only mention it. What is clear is this: here he describes this easygoing temper—the pleasure and enjoyment from every land. It is wonderful to live in Athens. It is, of course, in this situation a bit awkward: a funeral speech, and the countryside is completely devastated and on the verge of the plague. Of course, that he didn't know, but Thucydides had the feeling, I believe, that one must always anticipate such things.

Reader:
Then in the studies[24] of war we excel our enemies in this. We leave our city open to all men; nor was it ever seen that by banishing of strangers—[xxiv]

LS: The banishing of strangers was a common Spartan institution, you know; they drove out the strangers from time to time and wanted to be among themselves.

Reader:
we denied them the learning or sight of any of those things which, if not hidden, an enemy might reap advantage by, not relying on secret preparation and deceit but upon our own courage in the action. They, in their discipline, hunt after valour presently from their youth with laborious exercise, and yet we that live remissly undertake as great dangers as they. For example, the Lacedaemonians invade not our dominion by themselves alone but with the aid of all the rest. But when we invade our neighbours, though we fight in hostile ground against such as in their own ground fight in defense of their own substance, yet for the most part we get the victory. Never enemy yet fell into the hands of our whole forces at once both because we apply ourselves much to navigation and by land also send many of our men into divers countries abroad. But when, fighting with a part of it, they chance to get the better, they boast they have beaten the whole; and when they get the worse, they say they are beaten by the whole. And yet when, from ease rather than studious labour and upon natural rather than doctrinal valour—

[xxiii] Thucydides 2.38.
[xxiv] Thucydidies 2.39.4.

LS: "Doctrinal" is wrong: "legal." "And through courage of manners and not alongside of or together with law."

Reader:
we come to undertake any danger, we have this odds by it that we shall not faint beforehand with the meditation of future trouble, and in the action we shall appear no less confident than they that are ever toiling, procuring admiration to our city as well in this as in divers other things.

LS: Let us stop here. Now he has spoken of the liberty—of the easygoing temper of the Athenians, the life of pleasure and enjoyment which they lead. Now this of course would not have been possible without victorious wars. How does Athens behave in regard to national defense? There is a perfectly natural transition here. After all, war is not such a pleasurable and enjoyable thing, and so we still need [rest], and how do we behave there? Well, again in a liberal temper: no secrecy, no toil from childhood on, but easygoing, courageous, generous—and yet we are not inferior in war to the Spartans. And here you see that it is the genius of Athens, not discipline. That is a point which comes up all through Thucydides.

Student: I would like to refer back to chapter 38. The reference there is made that both the games and sacrifices are merely for the purpose of giving the minds recreation, which also further shows the tendency to base validity upon the recreation of the mind rather than upon the devotion or activity of this sort.

LS: That is perfectly correct. That is absolutely true. Now we must read the next sentence because of its—it is a wonderful sentence:

Reader:
For we also give ourselves to bravery, and yet with thrift; and to philosophy, and yet without mollification of the mind.[xxv]

LS: Yes. Now let us translate it a bit more literally: "For we love the beautiful with thrift; and we love wisdom without softness." And love of wisdom is of course philosophy. And I think when I used the expression of "Greekness" in order to explain what Thucydides means by the opposite of barbarism, I had this in mind: love of the beautiful and love of wisdom. That is probably, I think, the most well-known sentence from Thucydides, and in every simple presentation of what Athens is this will invariably come to mind. But the question is not what it suggests to us, who have read Plato and the tragedians and the comedians, but what Pericles means by it. That is the only question of interest. Now what does he understand by it? Love of the beautiful seems to be in danger of falling into prodigality, otherwise the emphasis on thrift wouldn't make sense. Therefore love of the beautiful must have something to do with wealth, and that is indeed the theme to which he turns: our love of the beautiful shows itself in the manner in which we use wealth. And

[xxv] Thucydides 2.40.1.

how do we do it? "We use our wealth decently, not boastingly"[xxvi]—that is bad taste. "And it is no shame with us to admit that one is poor, but [rather] not to avoid poverty by deed." The emphasis here is this: the love of the beautiful shows itself in deed, rather than in speeches. The speeches referred to here are boasting speeches on the one hand, or speeches in which you admit your poverty, which are not boasting,[25] which are perhaps the opposite of boasting but which are not very impressive if you don't make the necessary efforts to get out of this insolvent condition.

Student: Is softness the opposite of philosophy? Could Pericles have in mind here poetry, or something like that?

LS: No, I think he has in mind, as I have said more than once, what Callicles says against Socrates in the *Gorgias*: We don't sit around our whole life and prattle, but we have these kinds of things, discussions, when we are young; but as soon as we have become mature we go into action, political and military. That, I think, is it. Now you see the point here is this: the emphasis on deeds in contradistinction to speeches. And he goes on changing now the meaning of deeds somewhat. I mean this: Those concerned with deeds—i.e., with work, the laborers and artisans—are also concerned with political things. Athens is a city of deeds, of action, and the man who leads the retired life, we do not regard him as a non-meddler but as a useless fellow. That is the love of the beautiful as Pericles understands it—I don't say as Thucydides understands it. This implies, of course, that the political men—I mean those who are not laborers or artisans—they are nilly-willy concerned with speeches, naturally. We alone reject the unpolitical man as the useless man. In other words—and you must not forget that the term "love of the beautiful" does not mean primarily a love of sculptures and paintings, but it means the love of the beautiful, the noble, the resplendent, and such things as honor, you know, glory; that is primary. And that is of course shown by deed more than by speeches. Everyone can make[26] fine speeches, but to do fine deeds, that is difficult.

Student: Is it not so that "beautiful" is not a good translation of the Greek? That it means rather "fine," and ultimately the "magnificent"?

LS: Yes, perhaps "fine" is better, because it is more neutral: it can go in the direction of the fine arts as well as the fine deed. Yes, that is true. But nevertheless, I think that this misunderstanding—namely, that we think of the Parthenon when we hear that first, rather more than of the nonboasting rich man—is not accidental. Thucydides, as it were, erects a standard in the light of which we are going to judge of[27] [Pericles].[xxvii] Did he know what the glory of Athens truly was? Did he sufficiently understand it? What would be the glory of Pericles here, by the way, without Thucydides? What would it be? What would be the glory of the Peloponnesian War without him? It is the same thing. A man whom Pericles may not have known, as far as we know—perhaps he did know him, I don't

[xxvi] In this and the next sentence in quotation marks, Strauss resumes translating where the previous reader left off at 2.40.

[xxvii] Strauss's meaning is unclear here: the original transcript reads "Thucydides," but the context suggests that he misspoke and meant to say "Pericles." The reader must decide.

know—and [whom] he certainly wouldn't have taken[28] very seriously, determines his eternal glory, to which Pericles aspires, as we shall see from his last speech.

Now let us come to the other subject: the love of wisdom. The love of wisdom had to do with the Athenian posture toward speeches. They know that speeches are important, that you must speak, that you must be an orator, you must be able to reason and figure out—in Greek it is the same word, or the same root, [*logos*]. It is necessary. But here you see the greatness of Athens. The Athenians can combine that supreme rationality with the utmost daring. They are no Hamlets, in other words. Now this is exactly Athens. At the end he returns again to the Athenian love of the fine, how do the Athenians love virtue, and that he says in the last paragraph. I will summarize it. The Athenian way of making friends: We acquire friends not by receiving from them, but by giving freely, generously.

Student: Like the Thracians.[xxviii]

LS: Yes, and those others who receive—you know, who become friends by receiving cannot become friends to the same degree as we can. Translated into practical language: We have this many allies because we gave them things. Of course they cannot be as good friends to us as we are to them, and what are we going to do about it? Well, as Machiavelli would say, you must keep them friends. "You must keep them good," as Machiavelli says. And that of course he doesn't deny, but it would be improper, indecent, to mention this in a funeral speech; he mentions it in a political speech, the last speech—later. Now then we come to the application.

Student: Is it quite beside the point to say that this is a situation which has modern parallels?

LS: Oh yes, surely. Surely. But I would say that it wouldn't be necessary for such a powerful country as the United States to speak of aid. One could call it either—that would be humiliating, but perhaps it is true—tribute? . . . The Romans did that, why should America not do that? Or in other cases, simply insurance—I mean, self-help. Self-help. And one can question that, sure.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Have you ever read a funeral speech? Well, you can't speak about certain matters in a funeral speech. I have heard of a man who gave this funeral speech—that was of course not in this country, but in a much more rude country[29]—[for a] father [who, it was said,] died after his son had flunked his exam, and his daughter was already thirty and still not married. Then he ended his funeral speech with the remark: The deceased leaves a son who has not yet passed his examination and a daughter who is not yet married. That you can't do. It applies also to classical history.

[xxviii] The reference is obscure.

Student: Yet this is still no ordinary speech, because he says that our praise of these men shouldn't be too much because the hearers of the speech might not believe it and might be envious of it. So in a way, he sort of breaks the rules of a funeral speech.

LS: Well, surely that was a quite unusual funeral speech, I have no doubt; but however different it may be, it is still subject to certain rules of reason, let me say, whatever the custom of Athens may have been. Now in the next chapter, 41, he gives a summary: "The whole city is a school." You see, the point is this—the terrible thing here is that[30] the grandest sentences are true. It is correct to say, for example, that the city of Athens is the school of Greece. It surely became that, there is no question. And it is true to say of the Athenians that they loved wisdom and the beautiful as a community more than other communities, surely in olden times. And some of these other beautiful sentences are true. But the terrible thing is that they also are, as stated by Pericles in this context, self-destructive. That is the point. I think Thucydides gives us here his notion, which is not so different from Plato's, about the false lights of rhetoric. Rhetoric is needed, there is no question, but there is a very great danger in it.

"The whole city is the school of Greece, and each Athenian"—this I think is a most extraordinary statement—"and each Athenian is of graceful flexibility and thus self-sufficient."[xxix] This high development of the individual, we can say, explains the power of Athens, that power which is greater than its reputation of power. "Our enemies therefore are not indignant if defeated by people like us, because they know that the Athenians are there" [LS extends a hand toward the ceiling],[xxx] "nor are subjects ashamed to be subjected to people like us." In other words, we are the natural rulers. That [is what] it means. And of course the application to every individual is naturally somewhat doubtful. Our empire rests not on our own specific superiority, but on the recognition of that superiority by foes and subject alike. "We do not need a Homer, nor anyone whose verses supply momentary enjoyment, but having by our daring compelled every sea and land to have become accessible, we have left everywhere eternal monuments of evils and goods." He says evils first. And what that means is perfectly open.[xxxi] It can be understood in the way in which Grene understands it and others have understood it, namely, of evil and good deeds of our own.[xxxii] It can also mean of evil and good successes, that is perfectly possible. And the beauty is that it is undecided. It is possible that Pericles thought that even the evil deeds of Athens formed part of her superiority.

[xxix] Here and in the following two sentences in quotation marks, Strauss translates from Thucydides 2.41.

[xxx] As noted by the transcriber.

[xxxi] By "perfectly open" Strauss appears to mean not perfectly clear or transparent but rather equally open to more than one interpretation.

[xxxii] Strauss here refers to David Grene's footnote on this passage: "Thucydides says only 'having set up everywhere eternal memorials of *both good deeds and ill*.'" (Italics in original). See *The Peloponnesian War*, 112 n. Grene's footnote is evidently meant to question Hobbes's less literal, more interpretive translation, "[having] set up eternal monuments on all sides both of the evil we have done to our enemies and the good we have done to our friends" (2.41).

Now does this particular remark about Homer—"We don't need Homer," or something like that—remind you of something?

Student: Thucydides himself says that he thinks Homer's descriptions were not accurate descriptions, or at least poetic descriptions,[31] [of] past times—were not the best descriptions, and that he could supply the better descriptions.

LS: And he did not also speak of something like eternal moments? Something like it? "Eternal possession," he said; Periclean Athens left eternal memories, eternal monuments. "Eternal" is not correctly translated—"sempiternal possessions." Athens left "sempiternal monuments," Thucydides leaves a "sempiternal possession." What is better, monuments or possessions, if the chips are down? All right, what does he say: the monuments are of evil and good, and what does he say about his possession? In 1.21 or 1.22 and 1. 23? "Useful"![xxxiii] A brief indication of the difference between Pericles and Thucydides, and I believe that he regarded a useful everlasting possession as better than an everlasting monument of evil and good. That is the point.

Now in the next paragraph, chapter 42, about the third or fourth sentence—"And neither would those who were inferior in other things."

Reader:
Neither would praises and actions appear so levelly concurrent in many other of the Grecians as they do in these, the present revolution of these men's lives seeming unto me an argument of their virtues, noted in the first act thereof and in the last confirmed.

LS: What comes now, I meant.

Reader:
For even such of them as were worse than the rest do nevertheless deserve that for their valour shown in the wars for defence of their country they should be preferred before the rest. For having by their good actions abolished the memory of their evil, they have profited the state thereby more than they have hurt it by their private behaviour.[xxxiv]

LS: Isn't this fantastic? The involuntary irony, the involuntary irony of Pericles: Good riddance: Athens got rid of them. They did a dual favor to Athens: fighting bravely and taking themselves out of circulation, by the way. But more nicely stated, not every Athenian—that is here admitted—was a genius or an angel. I am so happy that this is eventually admitted, you know, after the description before. There were Athenian good-for-nothings. Well, I would have expected that without evidence. By dying for the city they have made their evil invisible, there is no question of that.

[xxxiii] Thucydides 1.22.4. Hobbes renders this adjective as "profitable."
[xxxiv] Thucydides 2.42.

The rest is also necessary, but we simply don't have the time, and especially the remarks he makes, the remarks of comfort addressed to the parents and to the orphans and to the widows, they are also quite remarkable. They are surely free from all modern sentimentality, but one can also say that they have been only rather cold comfort to these poor people. But I would like to make another remark which is much more striking, regarding a fact which is much more striking. This is a funeral speech on men who died. What does he say about death in that speech? Or to make the question more manageable, does he ever mention death? He does.

Student: It is something which is a quick short thing, and it is all over and nobody feels it.

LS: That is the passage which I mean, at the end of chapter 43. Will you read that?

Reader:
For to a man of any spirit death, which is without sense, arriving whilst he is in vigour and common hope, is nothing so bitter as after a tender life to be brought into misery

LS: In Greek it is much more forceful because the word death is at the end of the sentence. You know, the whole paragraph ends with the word "death," but accompanied by the adjective "unnoticeable," "unfelt." So the real toughness of death is never mentioned. The only mention of death takes death from the side which is most compatible with the easygoingness celebrated throughout this speech. Thucydides makes one hundred percent clear what he thinks about that by what follows immediately: the description of death in the description of the plague.

I don't think we have been doing an unsavory job of debunking, because I think we only bring out what Thucydides meant. This is perfectly compatible with a very high regard for Pericles, relatively speaking. That will come out very strongly in Thucydides's appreciation of Pericles in chapter 65, which we will discuss next time. Now there are many more things which we have to mention, but we have not—. We will have to take up the plague section next time. That doesn't mean that the speaker will have to report about the plague section. But it would be good if you all would reread it. Yes?

Student: Could I make a small point with regard to that last sentence about death? There is quite a bit of irony in these speeches, as we have found, and that last sentence can be applied to Athens and the history of the war quite interestingly. Pericles himself was quickly out of it while Athens was in its prime, but Athens had a very long, painful, and lingering death.

LS: That is very good, yes. It is also very strange that—yes, sure. The simple moral question also comes up later, comes up in the last speech. I believe we must become accustomed to the fact that Thucydides neither underwrites Sparta simply, nor Athens simply. It is much more subtle than that, and I can perhaps substantiate this. I made this

tentative list about the relation of Sparta and Athens, just putting things together without any order, and in the following form. Two columns, Sparta and Athens:

Sparta	**Athens**
Moderation	Daring
Discipline	Native genius
Hypocrisy	Frankness, generosity
Stability	Instability
Narrow and harsh	Open and gentle (relatively speaking)
Divine law the highest thing	Art the highest thing (art with a small "a")

That is for the time being the best I can do, and of course that shows the complexity, you see, why we can't[32] simply take sides. And I think what he probably has in mind is that you cannot put together a city which has only the good qualities—that is I think his implicit criticism of Plato and Aristotle. Plato and Aristotle speak of the best regime and mean of course the city that has all the good qualities and lacks the bad ones. And I believe that somehow Thucydides suspected that this wouldn't work. I mean, there are some unpleasant necessary connections. If you want to have this openness and gentleness, you have to be, you have to come close to license; and if you want to have virtue proper, you have to come close to a rather nasty harshness, that is, not in individuals but in societies. And surely the thought should not be dismissed out of hand.

Student: I would like to raise a discussion question which has aroused my curiosity. You mentioned that Pericles and Thucydides agreed in their awareness that they were living at the time of the peak, that Athens was at its peak. In other words, things happened that had never happened before. Thucydides would seem to make it plain that he had best understood the events as they happened on that peak. Now this is what I want to ask—this is not my point, it is the background, though: Do you think that when Xenophon finished it—Thucydides wrote until the twenty-first year and Xenophon carried on after that?

LS: Yes, you can say that, and you must also not underestimate a certain irony in this claim of Thucydides on his own behalf. But the difference is this, Xenophon always points to another man: Socrates.

Same Student: But here's what I'm concerned about—which is all right, what you said. The Thirty Tyrants came some time after Thucydides finished writing his history. Did Thucydides, living on the peak, really understand?

LS: He saw the Thirty Tyrants. He died some years after the war.

Same Student: But did he really understand?

LS: Did he not?

Same Student: I don't think that he did.

LS: Why not? After all, he had understood Cleon and Alcibiades, and had seen some of these other fellows; he has no difficulty in understanding that. I think he makes his position perfectly clear when he states that in the revolution of 411 in Athens—the tyrants and these kinds of people, you know, people somehow linked with Socrates—that this was the best regime. Every modern historian is simply shocked by this statement. The short-lived regime only lasted a few months, and he should have said that at this time, and not at Pericles's time, Athens had the best regime. That shows the nearness of Thucydides to Plato. That is my last remark.

What I said before in relation to the speaker's paper I can now state as follows: The book starts when you read the first chapter itself and surrender completely to this message. Then you have the impression that the only thing that counts is war, and the Peloponnesian War is the greatest war. What greater field could anyone choose? Well, war—at any rate for the *polis*; in war the *polis* is particularly noticeable, of course—and deeds. That is the first impression. Then we gradually learn that speeches are of some importance. In Pericles's say-so, speeches are important. But these speeches are absolutely understood to be in the service of deeds—you know, like Pericles's own speeches. And all the speeches recorded in Thucydides are all speeches in the service of deeds. And then the step which Thucydides and some other men took was to see [that] beyond it[33] there is the speech making manifest what never changes—as the nature of man—and that is what Thucydides is doing. And this is the peak, and this was his greatness. That does not mean that he was the only one. They didn't quote one another, you know. That was not usual to quote; it happens very rarely, and I don't think the reason is anything as low as jealousy. I have not understood it, but it is a fact.

Student: They hadn't invented theses, had they!

LS: No, no. The most striking exception I remember is the reference of Xenophon to Plato. That is really an exception which proves the rule. In a certain chapter of the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon says Socrates was benevolent to Glaucon, the hero of the *Republic*, for the sake of Charmides, the son of Glaucon, later one of the thirty tyrants, and for the sake of Plato.[xxxv] The compliment is that no father's name is mentioned; he doesn't need it—Plato. If you don't know who Plato is, I can't help you. But the only mention—Plato of course never mentions Xenophon—but Thucydides, he mentions one rhetorician who was his teacher, but he was dead when he wrote: Antiphon.[xxxvi] But, as I

[xxxv] See Xenophon *Memorabilia* 6.1. Charmides was the son not of Glaucon the brother of Plato but of Glaucon the grandfather of Plato; he was therefore not Plato's nephew but his uncle. He would become notorious not as one of the "Thirty Tyrants" (the oligarchy that briefly ruled Athens after its defeat in the Peloponnesian War), but as one of the Ten, appointed by the Thirty to control the Piraeus, the port of Athens.

[xxxvi] On Antiphon, see Thucydides 8.68.1-2. Modern critics disagree as to whether there was one Antiphon or two ("the sophist" and "the rhetorician"); he or they flourished in the late fifth century. An ancient tradition identified him as Thucydides's teacher; this may, however, have been merely an inference from Thucydides's praise of him in the passage just cited.

say, the rule cannot have been without exception, as is shown by the example of Xenophon who made this remark at a time when Plato was surely still alive.

Student: It is amazing Aristophanes doesn't mention him.

LS: Yes, very strange. When you think what a small town compared with ours now Athens is, and that after all there could have been only one Thucydides, and his greatness must have appeared to quite a few people. You know? Part of the reason could be that Thucydides was exiled, you know, for quite some time.

Student: Yet wouldn't they have talked about him?

LS: Yes, but it would have been imprudent. That could have been, but that doesn't explain it[34] all, because some of the plays surely antedate Thucydides's exile.

Student: For example, it is [35]Dionysius, the orator (someone Hobbes says copied Thucydides eight times), who was later a big political figure in Athens—

LS: Do you mean Demosthenes?[xxxvii] Well, that was much later, that is much later when the very severe conventions of the classical period were no longer as strong.

[xxxvii] Demosthenes the son of Demosthenes, Athenian orator (384-322), who spearheaded Greek resistance to the rising power of Macedonia.

Session 5: January 17, 1962
Book 2, Chapters 52-103

Leo Strauss: You will be as little surprised as I am by the excellence of this paper; we had a specimen of the speaker's qualities already last time.[i] And apart from that I am very glad that he stated his view, completely different from mine, with such force and clarity. I don't think that I can answer your critique of my view now, and we will just have to keep the discussion in flow until we are at the end. I only hope that in case I trespass, you will call me back.

Now there are many excellent points which you made. I mention only two points which I had not observed. For example, this Potidaea–Xenophon business I thought was very excellent. This remark, you know: they could escape, they could save themselves by virtue of their disapproved action . . . And also what you said about this Sitalces business, that this was an Athenian mistake, is surely worth hearing but in this case I believe another explanation is at least necessary in addition. But these are minor points.

You begin by quoting the remark of Megillus[ii] about his old[1] family relations[2] with Athens, and you saw of course how left-handed the compliment was. But this is not immediately important. And now we come to the crucial assertion: that the history of Thucydides is a tragedy. Well, what is a tragedy? That is hard to state. You wisely quoted Aristotle—not that we are entitled to ascribe to Thucydides, or even to Sophocles and Aeschylus, Aristotle's view of tragedy; you know, that would be a long question—but surely we would do much worse by taking any other definition of tragedy. Now if we take, as you did, Aristotle's definition of tragedy, is the history a tragedy? A tragedy in Aristotle's sense must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Does Thucydides's *History* have a beginning, a middle, and an end? Or in what sense? I mean, the tragic hero, if I understood you, is Athens. Does this history show us the end of Athens?

Student: Well, this is a very difficult question, because you run into the question of whether the histories are finished or not. I am making the assumption that the thing might have run down. I would advance that I think it is a good assumption that Thucydides's intention at least was to complete the war down to the end. I think there are a few places here which indicate that this is his intention. For some reason he was prevented from doing that.

LS: Yes, but since you were taking such an intelligent and broad view, I would like to reply to you in the same manner. And you used another comparison which inevitably, I think, suggests itself, and that is the comparison with the *Iliad*. Now in the *Iliad* we have also a city which is a kind of tragic hero; in this case of course not the Greek city, but Troy. And the *Iliad* does not present the capture and destruction of Troy (which I think

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] Megillus is a character in Plato's dialogue *Laws*. A Spartan, he asserts his kinship with Athens at *Laws* 642b-c. Presumably the student mentioned him in the paper that he has just read in class.

shows the good sense of Homer immediately), and if anything, I would say Thucydides decided to imitate that and that the roles are reversed: it is this time not a barbarian city but a Greek city, his own city, connected in a more meaningful—you could say it is in a way unbearable to present it on its various levels. But of course in the *Iliad* you can rightly say that the hero of the *Iliad* is not Troy. The hero is merely described, defined, in the beginning of the *Iliad* as Achilles, and his tragic fate is fully presented. So in other words, I am not sure that we can call the *History* a tragedy. By the way, your reference to what Aristotle says was of course quite correct, but I don't believe it is ordinarily understood. Aristotle is extremely precise but he is not necessarily exhaustive, and his definition of tragedy is given on the basis of the evidence available—you know, *n* tragedies that he knows—and on the basis of the process of induction he arrives at the definition of tragedy. There is something very difficult and even some question-begging—you know, you have to know in advance what is a tragedy in order to circumscribe your sphere of induction—and this initial notion of tragedy is of course never clarified, except that they were meant to be tragedies and many of them were surely not very good tragedies. For example, why must there[3] be a middle in a tragedy, as Aristotle demands? It is an old story. On the basis of induction, you could say: Look around you; practically all tragedies are based on this, that is good enough for me. I do not believe that this is sufficient.

Student: Peripeteia? Change?

LS: Well, there was the example of Agathon which he mentions,[iii] but on the whole it is true they are all based on that, generally. But it is a mere fact, i.e., unintelligible in itself. Now then we turn to the key definition: that there must be a disproportion between guilt and misfortune. That is the way in which we can state it. The misfortune was beyond what was deserved. Yes, but where do we find that? What is the classic area of such punishments? And then I would say divine punishment. And that is the connection with myth. [. . .] But this only in passing. And I only say this: It is not sufficient to understand the wording of Aristotle and apply it intelligently, as you did. Aristotle leaves some things unsaid which are of the utmost importance. So I will not accept for the time being—[though] I may [yet] be persuaded by your argument—your thesis that this is a tragedy. What it is, we don't know. It is perhaps safe to say it is a description of the Peloponnesian War which at the same time is meant to reveal to us the nature of man as a political being. This is, I think, a safe statement, and I would for the time being not go beyond that.

Now we come to your very interesting points, your distinctions or oppositions between Plato and Thucydides; and these statements were very sensible because you saw more deeply into Plato than most of the people who make such comparisons do. Surely, if we contrast Plato's judgment—or rather Socrates's judgment in the *Gorgias* with the conversations with these and these people conducted with this and this circumstances—

[iii] Agathon, the son of Tisamenus (ca. 448-ca 400 BCE) was an Athenian tragic poet, none of whose works survive. He was celebrated for his innovations in both style and substance. There are several mentions of him in Aristotle's writings; in all likelihood Strauss here references *Poetics* 1451b19-23.

with these qualifications, Thucydides has an infinitely more favorable judgment on Pericles than Plato has. But why is that so? You use the word "Plato is a philosopher, and Thucydides is a historian," which is of course sound but not necessarily enlightening. Your defense, if I may call it that, of Pericles was based on the premise that political life is necessary. And if it is necessary, and if it is a desirable that it be on a high level of civilization, which you can have rather in Athens than in Sparta, then such a man like Pericles is highly admirable and a kind of marvel. I believe that this is not the issue, because Plato was concerned with another question. Plato was concerned not with the question[4] [whether] political life, the activity of the state, is necessary and[5] a true statesman highly admirable, but whether political life is the best life. That is the question, which was not the theme of Thucydides. I think if Plato had limited himself to a purely political statement[6]—there is no purely political statement of Plato, with the possible exception of the *Laws*—I believe that one can easily show that. In the *Republic*, the personnel: these are not political men; these are young fellows with political ambitions, and of course a famous teacher of rhetoric, and these kinds of people. The only conversation with political men, old hands in politics, is the *Laws*. In the *Statesman*, it is a young mathematician, the last[7] [person] with which you would wish to have a political conversation, is that not true? And there are some dialogues [that] are a bit different—I mean the *Meno*, where an old hand at Athenian politics, Anytus, and the supercrook Meno are the heroes, but they are also cutthroats. How do you say it in English? Now furthermore—but there is one thing on which Plato had very definite ideas, namely, this: however important the individual statesman and his moral and intellectual qualities may be, what he can and cannot do for good or ill depends very much on the institutional framework in which he lives. Then the question arises: Was the framework, the institutional framework in which Pericles operated the best possible? And here I must say that Thucydides thinks that it was not. You know in this respect, as strange as it may sound, there is an agreement between Plato or Socrates and Thucydides that a much more limited democracy, if one can put it this way—meaning a mixed regime, a mean between oligarchy and democracy—would be preferable.

When you say Plato idealized Sparta and Thucydides idealized Athens, I would say here you make the opposition too great. To mention only one point: that Socrates was not a laconizer is obvious; that is what Callicles, who doesn't understand him, says. But what evidence do we have for any laconizing on the part of Socrates? We have one massive piece of evidence, and that is in the *Republic*, where he puts Sparta as timocracy much higher than democracy. You remember? The best regime: timocracy, i.e., Sparta, oligarchy; [then] democracy, i.e., Athens. Yes, but the *Republic* is a special case, and I would say that the *Republic* was the last book to which I would go in order to find Plato's political judgments.

If we turn to the *Laws*, what does he do in the *Laws*? In the *Laws*, an old Athenian comes up to Crete—which is still more Spartan than Sparta and is meant to be, you know, the source of Sparta—and tries to find out what these wonderful old laws stemming from Zeus are. And the net result, reached in twenty pages—less than twenty pages—is that they are no good [. . .] because they have no higher aim than victory in war. That is not good enough. And then it happens that this old Athenian sketches to them a polity and

laws which are of Athenian origin. It is the old, what the Athenians called or what the conservative Athenians called the ancestral *polis* which Socrates introduces to the Cretans. You see, one could say here is even agreement that a certain pre-Periclean Athens—or even a[8] . . . Athens is praised by the Athenian stranger in the *Laws* beyond anything Spartan. The situation is, I think, somewhat more complex. But why the appearance of Plato's black laconizing,[iv] an appearance supported especially by the *Republic*?[9] I think the answer is clear. I believe there would be no disagreement here between Thucydides and Plato. Sparta was more of a *polis* than Athens. You know? I don't know whether you have ever read Bergson's very useful book on the two sources of morality and religion, and the distinction which he makes there between open and closed societies.[v] The people who copy from it don't have the breadth of Bergson. And there you read Bergson's description of the closed society, which he calls *la cité*. That is of course much more Sparta than Athens. And Athens was a much greater—if I may use a terrible modern word, a much greater society than Sparta, but it was less of a *polis*. In other words, the element of the closely-knit, of the reliability going with that in their internal affairs—of course, I mean that is more visible in Sparta. And I think that is underlined all through the *Republic*. At any rate, that is a very long question, and while quite a few points that you made are very impressive, I think it has to be an open question.

I was particularly grateful to you for the statistical data regarding *aretē*. I suppose you used the index. You read it, that's wonderful. Will you let me see your list? That would be a good supplement to the index, because I never have made that. And you said that Thucydides used the word *aretē* only twice, and once it was when he speaks of Brasidas, and the other when speaks of Nicias.[vi] Yes, but in the case of Nicias the use is very interesting: an adjective is added. Do you remember it?

Student: *Aretē nenomismenē*.

LS: Yes, in other words, the *nomos*-like *aretē*. I don't know whether *nomizein* [. . .] What would be the best translation?[vii] You know, *nomizein* is derivative from the word *nomos*, which we ordinarily translate by "custom" or "law" or "convention." But the word derivative from it is often translated by "I believe," in the very general sense, "I hold." [. . .] *Aretē nenomismenē* would then be the virtue held—the virtue held, held in repute, and being virtue essentially by virtue of the fact that it is held in repute. It is not virtue simply, whatever that may mean.

[iv] It is not clear what Strauss means by "black laconizing"; this may be a transcription error.
[v] Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932).
[vi] The student's assertion is mistaken. At 6.54 Thucydides speaks of the virtue of the Athenian tyrants; at 8.68 of the virtue of Antiphon. Cf. Strauss, *The City and Man*.
[vii] *Aretē nenomismenē*, "what is believed or held to be virtue." The verb *nomizein,* to hold or believed, is linked etymologically with *nomos*, law or convention. Hence Strauss's suggestion that in ascribing to Nicias *aretē nenomismenē* Thucydides intends something less than virtue by nature or in the full sense. The reference is to Thucydides 7.86.6.

Same Student: I think the whole phrase there needs to be taken into account. For it seems to me [that] the interesting thing is in the way—what he is praising Nicias for. That he does praise him does indicate, it seems to me anyhow, that he thought more of Nicias than any of the other people he had mentioned.

LS: Yes, that is hard to say.

Same Student: The reason is difficult—

LS: I think that has very much to do also with his praise of Pericles. Thucydides makes his explicit praises very much with a view to general consumption. And from this point of view, the point of view of a very decent citizen and a very nice man, Nicias is indeed outstanding, and Pericles still in a much higher place. But that is not necessarily identical with the judgment emerging from the narrative. If my recollection is correct, Demosthenes—in the third book especially, and also later on in Sicily—is a much more attractive man, a much more gifted man. He makes mistakes, but he learns from them. You see, Nicias is classically ridiculed at the beginning of Aristophanes's *Knights*, and also in Plato's *Laches*. There is of course also a *Life of Nicias* by Plutarch, but these contemporary statements by Aristophanes and—no, Nicias is (how should I say it?) the most respectable citizen, and also a man of infinite [. . .] you know, this I think is not irrelevant for respectability, and also a very respectable man of the old type and therefore much more Spartan in many respects than the others are. And there is one point which I believe[10] you must not overlook. When we come later to Alcibiades, this terribly corrupt man but a man of the greatest genius, a greater genius than Pericles—I mean, the things which he does, you know, [are] even in a way more fantastic than Themistocles. Themistocles could take care of the affairs of the barbarians as well as [those of the] Greeks, but Alcibiades runs away from Athens, becomes a traitor (not unjustifiably, because the Athenians acted very foolishly), and then he makes Sparta's policy—like nothing! And of course in the long run this doesn't work, and then he makes a new combination with the Persian king. He succeeds even in getting back to Athens. There is a moment there which is very impressive, [in] which Thucydides[viii] brings together the two opposed Athenian factions, the democrats and the oligarchs, and at the same time the Persians and the Athenians, a master [. . .] Sure, there is something unsolid about it, but also something really impressive, and Thucydides, [whom] I think is a very responsible man, had his praise of these great natural gifts [and] played that down. And perhaps he played up the praise of citizen decency and this kind of more ordinary qualities, you know.

Student: I'm going on this largely by the effect—even allowing for the way this sentence about Nicias is phrased—the effect on me personally is that this comes leaping off the page—

LS: Yes, but it has also something to do with[11] the context, and that is that Nicias was among the famous Athenians the most pious, and therefore the expectation that a man of his piety should be rewarded in that terrible way, what happened to him in Sicily with a

[viii] Strauss evidently meant to say Alcibiades (cf. 8.81-82; 86.4-8).

view to his expectation it is so absolutely terrible. If such a thing had happened to Demosthenes, you know—

Student: It did—

LS: Yes, it did, that is quite true, but Demosthenes, so to say, always expected that. Nicias was not quite expecting that. And the genuine compassion which Thucydides has for Nicias—there is no question about that—is relative however to Nicias's expectations, expectations which Thucydides did not necessarily share. That has to be taken into consideration. But I repeat my thanks for your paper.

We have to say a few words about the account of the plague, which we cannot completely omit. You remember the description of the plague follows almost immediately on the funeral speech. And Thucydides describes then what the plague does to the Athenians: the destruction of all piety and all morality through this terrible thing. The plague is the natural equivalent to the civil wars and factions, which have the same effect and which are described toward the end of the third book. Thucydides gives a very detailed, almost medical account of the plague, as we have seen. He calls it a mighty change (*metabolē*), change, upheaval, *kinēsis*, unrest. You know, we have seen this going through the whole book from the very beginning, the complete breakdown of society and virtue and justice. [That] the sick people have no rest is mentioned in passing—you know, unrest in the life of the individual is found here. Thucydides emphasizes the fact that he himself has suffered from this illness, so to Thucydides war became a violent teacher. He learned something [he didn't know before], first about the plague,[12] but also about the effect of the plague: how thin the wall is between ordinary decency and complete destruction of everything. The disease is said to be greater than the *logos*, surpassing the laws[ix]—undescribable, as it were, something unnatural. And here in the fifty-fourth chapter we find a statement which is of some help for the understanding of the primary distinction of Thucydides. Chapter 53, if you will turn to that, roughly the second half.

Reader:
And the great licentiousness, which also in other kinds was used in the city, began at first from this disease. For that which a man before would dissemble and not acknowledge to be done for voluptuousness, he durst now do freely, seeing before his eyes such quick revolution, of the rich dying and men worth nothing inheriting their estates. Insomuch as they justified a speedy fruition of the[x] goods even for their pleasure, as men that thought they held their lives but by the day. As for pains, no man was forward in any action of honour to take any because they thought it uncertain whether they should die or not before they achieved it. But what any man knew to be delightful and to be profitable to pleasure, that was made both profitable and honorable.[xi]

[ix] "The laws" doesn't seem to fit here, since, as confirmed by the context, *logos* means not law but reason or speech or argument. Either Strauss misspoke here, or the transcriber erred.
[x] In the original: "their goods."
[xi] Thucydides 2.53.

LS: The pleasant, and the pleasant alone, and what is subservient to the pleasant is the noble. Note the Greek equivalent to what we call moral or decent, the reduction of morality to pleasure. You see, that is a famous Platonic and Socratic formula, too, but there is a distinction. That is one point. Now go on.

Reader:
Neither the fear of the gods nor laws of men awed any man, not the former because they concluded it was alike to worship or not worship from seeing that alike they all perished, nor the latter because no man expected that lives would last till he received punishment of his crimes by judgment. But they thought there was now over their heads some far greater judgment decreed against them before which fell, they thought to enjoy some little part of their lives.

LS: You see here, when he speaks of these two different things, the fear of gods and the *nomos* of human beings, there is no coordination of punishment with the gods, you know. The punishment they expected only from men, not the gods. This is of some importance: here there is no mention of a divine *nomos*. That comes up only much later, in chapter 82 of book 3, in the chapter about civil war in Corcyra and the complete breakdown of all morality, when you have [the] clearest and most detailed list of morals occurring in the whole book. And in the next chapter he describes that an oracle of Apollo was fulfilled.

Reader:
Such was the misery into which the Athenians being fallen were much oppressed, having not only their men killed by the disease within but the enemy also laying waste their fields and villages without. In this sickness also (as it was not unlikely they would) they called to mind this verse said also of the elder sort to have been uttered of old:

A Doric war shall fall,
And a great plague withal.

Now were men at variance about the word, some saying it was not *loimos* [plague], that was by the ancients mentioned in that verse, but *limos* [famine].[xii]

LS: That is of course [. . .] the difference between plague and hunger.

Reader:
But upon the present occasion the word *loimos* deservedly obtained. For as men suffered, so they made the verse to say. And I think if after this there shall ever come another Doric war and with it a famine, they are like to recite the verse accordingly. There was also reported by such as knew a certain answer given by the oracle to the Lacedaemonians when they inquired

[xii] Thucydides 2.54.

whether they should make this war or not: *that if they warred with all their power, they should have the victory, and that the God himself would take their parts.*

LS: That is also of course a reminder of the *Iliad*; rather, of the beginning of the *Iliad*, you remember, when Apollo brings the plague against the Greeks in order to assist his priest, Chryses. And here you see the oracle is in a way true: Apollo promised to help the Spartans; Apollo is the sender of such plagues. That makes sense. This is only in passing. But Thucydides goes on to say that this theory is not quite true, because the plague also happened in other largely populated cities, not only in Athens. At any rate, the consequence [of the devastation of Attica and of the plague] is[13] [that it] induced the Athenians to wish peace with Sparta and to turn against Pericles. Here is the first collapse of popular morale in Athens. And Pericles is compelled to defend his war policy, and that he does in the last speech, chapter 60 to 64.

We can only state some general things. The point which he makes is that the private good of each depends on the good of the city. You see, now we have seen a breakdown of morale; that means a separation of private interest and public interest. Everyone for himself: that is the breakdown in morale that is the consequence of the plague especially. So Pericles reminds the Athenians of some simple verities: the private good of each depends on the good of the city; the destruction of the fatherland is the ruin of each. And that is simply true, of course, if it is a really tough war—I mean, if defeat means that you will be killed, or at best sold into slavery, and of course separated from your family. And therefore full dedication to the city is the absolutely commonsensical thing. But dedication to the city is of course compatible with making peace. Why cannot the city make peace now with Sparta? Or in other words, dedication to the city is not necessarily dedication to Pericles. Who, then, is Pericles? And he must speak of himself. Let us read that, the last third of chapter 60: "And yet you are angry with me, a man of such kind."

Reader:
And it is I you are angry withal, one, as I think myself, inferior to none either in knowing what is requisite or in expressing what I know, and a lover of my country and superior to money.[xiii]

LS: "A lover of the *polis* and superior to money."

Reader:
For he that hath good thoughts and cannot clearly express them were as good to have thought nothing at all. He that can do both and is ill affected to his country will likewise not give it faithful counsel. And he that will do that too yet if he be superable by money will for that alone set all the rest to sale. Now if you followed my advice in making this war, as esteeming these virtues to be in me somewhat above the rest, there is sure no reason that I should now be accused of doing you wrong.

[xiii] Thucydides 2.60.

LS: So in the context, "I am such and such a man, and listening to such a man, you yourself decided upon the war." Hence the decision cannot have been unreasonable, and we must go on with the war. But that, of course, is not quite sufficient. He says in the beginning of 62 that a point never before uttered is made necessary by the present depression of the Athenians. And then he speaks of the decisive importance of sea power. But still that point was made very often before, so I believe the entirely new point is only coming up very slowly. It is not the sea power. He makes now the point that sea power is good also for future further expansion, of course after the war. But one could say is it not sheer madness to speak now of imperialism. Is the issue not merely to defend Athens' survival and freedom?[14] This is truly the new point which is coming up after in chapter 63. "No," Pericles says, "you have become hated for your empire; you cannot now return to the position of a private city, as it were. You are a tyrant. Now while it is thought unjust to acquire tyranny, it is surely dangerous to lose it. I mean, you have to go on, you will be terribly punished if you give in. You can't have peace. If you lose the war, or even if you try to end the war, you will be terribly punished. Ultimately there is no choice between subjection and tyrannical rule on your part." This, I think, is the thing never before said in Athens publicly, and Pericles says it now because the power of the peace party has never been so great, naturally after the plague.

And Pericles goes on to say that the political situation is not affected by the plague: We are still at the peak of our power, an eternally memorable power whose fame will not perish even if we perish. The hatred which we incurred by our empire is only the reverse side, the momentary side, of present splendor and eternal glory. This eternal glory is unambiguously noble, and our present splendor not quite so. Pericles is completely silent on the fact that the Spartans were the aggressors, as he always was. No, come to think of it, he mentioned it at the beginning of his first speech, but here he is completely silent about it. Here he does no longer pretend that Athens has been the benefactor of the other Greeks, and especially of her allies. You will remember that that played a great role in the funeral speech: You are universally hated. Now this is surely also a political speech in this particular situation where he must tell the Athenians that there is no hope in anything but continuing the war. Therefore he must overstate the degree to which Athens is hated, whereas in the funeral speech he had to understate it. And we have to figure out what—but surely it is an important correction of the funeral speech.

[The] eternal glory of Athens, long surviving them: that is the thing for which every misery is to be accepted, and which would survive, of course, although they were ruined. Not the survival of Athens but her eternal glory is the thing to be fought for. That is the subtlety of this eternal glory. He makes clear in the sixty-fourth chapter that there is an important connection between honor and wealth: you know, eternal glory that is so high and shining that [it] has nothing to do with such low things as money and wealth. But in fact that is not quite so. There is an agreement here between Thucydides and Plato. When Plato presents the timocracy, the polity dedicated to honor, as distinguished from the oligarchy, the polity dedicated to wealth, we see that the concern with wealth is already inherent in the timocracy. These are only two different sides of the same thing.

Now it is clear that Pericles himself is in a way animated by this spirit: What is life? The only thing which counts is eternal glory. But it is of course a great difference in the case of the individual and in the case of the *polis*. We can say that Pericles is the imperial peak of[15] imperial Athens, and he indeed can identify his private good completely with this common good because his private good was not these possessions, you know?, which he could abandon easily at the beginning of the war. This is so impressive a statement that one must wonder: Can Thucydides have rejected this notion of the best life which is implied in Pericles's speech, since he is such an eloquent presenter of it? What would[16] human life [be] if such a thought and such an inspiration were absent from it? Again, one would ask with Machiavelli the question: Yet would it not also be destructive of human life in itself if the other thing, "Sparta," did not balance it as rest balances motion? The whole cannot be there if there is not both rest and motion. And must there not also be similarly this highest form of the concern with motion, the imperialism of Athens? Motion, aggrandizement, glory has to be balanced by something else. Yet let us consider Thucydides's own sober comments.

Student: I couldn't understand you, that last thing you said.

LS: That Thucydides was somehow—[that he] understood the beauty of what Pericles meant.

Same Student: In other words, that Pericles himself did not see—

LS: No, no, no. Thucydides saw what Pericles saw. But the question is whether Thucydides did not see something else, whether he did not see the Periclean project as part of a larger whole. You know? I mean, if Pericles's idea is the highest form of motion, must there not also be an opposite idea belonging with rest?

Student: What bothers me here is that the element of rest does not reside in Pericles's own understanding.

LS: Yes, but we do not know that. I mean, after having read this last speech and tried to understand, to follow Pericles's flight, let us see what Thucydides himself says. It is at the beginning of chapter 65.

Reader:
In this speech did Pericles endeavour to appease the anger of the Athenians towards himself and withal to withdraw their thoughts from the present affliction.[xiv]

LS: Is this not like a douche of cold water after this very grand speech, to say that that was the way Pericles tried to avert the anger of the Athenians against him and to drive away their mind from the present misfortune? In other words, is it not a kind of mirage, the eternal glory, to make them forget the tough thing which is? Is it not strange? He tries to draw away the minds of the Athenians from their present misery. Perhaps Pericles was

[xiv] Thucydides 2.65.

aware of the illusion of eternal glory. I say "illusion" of eternal glory, because[17] [what] certainty can Pericles possibly have that there will be an eternal glory of Athens? I mean, how can he know that? I have said this before. I mean, if we think of the great political names, Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon—you know, beyond all national boundaries—none of them found a historian like Thucydides. Caesar himself wrote his *Gallic Wars*,[xv] which is a very good book in its way, but no one in his senses can think of comparing it to Thucydides's *History*. What would Pericles be without Thucydides? (I mean not for people who dig up every little pot and so on, but for the recollection of the human race.) Nothing! Would there be an eternal glory of Pericles without Thucydides, i.e., without something on which he could in no way count? But the eternal glory of Athens is a different story. But this eternal glory of Athens, to which the speaker very nicely and generously referred, is least due to Athens' power politics as such, and no political glory of the Periclean age is comparable to that of the Persian Wars. That I think cannot be gainsaid. Well, I exaggerate grossly to make perfectly clear my point, so don't take it ill, [but] the Peloponnesian War is a boring and squalid war compared with the Persian Wars. In other words, we are here the victims of a delusion, a delusion consciously created by Thucydides. And if we are reflective readers, we see Thucydides more than Pericles. I mean, this has nothing to do with any petty vanity of Thucydides, but with Thucydides's true sense of "values," that he makes us see through his narrative and through his speeches what Athens at her best truly was. This was the point which you had in mind.

Student: I see—

LS: Yes, sometimes I take this liberty—when we read Thucydides I believe we cannot understand him better than he understood himself. But when I am confronted with a student that I know as well as you, I sometimes have the nerve to believe that I can understand him better than he can understand himself. Now let us read this appreciation of Pericles.

Student: Do you think that Thucydides—how far does Thucydides go in understanding Pericles?

LS: That is very hard to say. What do we know about Pericles? We know of course a bit because we have Plutarch's *Lives*; we have certain remarks in Plato and especially in Xenophon. But in Xenophon, well, I must say that Xenophon has such a bad reputation today that I would be ruled out of court if I were to quote him. Now in Xenophon Pericles is presented as a rather pompous man, you know, and not comparable to that naughty Alcibiades.

Same Student: Did you understand my question? Did he really grasp the phenomenon, or phenomena of—

LS: I believe he did.

[xv] *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (58-49 BCE).

Same Student: Did he not improve Pericles?

LS: No, I think he did, he may have—well, I won't even say that [he] "idealized" Pericles; he brought out the greatness of Pericles. But the question is whether Thucydides did not see something higher than Pericles. That is the question. The ordinary view is that[18] Thucydides to Pericles [is] equal to the first-rate present British historian to Churchill. In other words, that the first-rate British historian now (I don't know the names) would say that what he is doing is at best communicating the great political wisdom and achievement of Churchill and communicating it to the literate part of the British people, which is of course a very great thing, to do that properly. But Thucydides, I think, meant more than that—meant more than that because Thucydides was not merely a historian. This is the truth in what the speaker said that this is a tragedy in a way like Homer's *Iliad*. While that is not literally true, I believe it simply brings out that fact that this cannot be understood as simply history. It is much more than that: it is true wisdom. Now then let us read what he says there about what happened after: they stopped hating him, but they did not stop hating him before they had imposed on him a fine.

Reader:
Nevertheless, not long after (as is the fashion of the multitude) they made him general again and committed the whole state to his administration.[xvi]

LS: One second. The fickle multitude—of course you know that, talking to his conservative country-club friends, but then he shows immediately afterward that it wasn't so.

Reader:
For the sense of their domestic losses was now dulled, and for the need of the commonwealth they prized him more than any other whatsoever.

LS: In other words, the Athenians were not such a bad lot, in spite of this seeming dig at them. Now let us go on.

Reader:
For as long as he was in authority in the city in time of peace, he governed the same with moderation and was a faithful watchman of it—

LS: That is very difficult. I must say a word about it. The word he uses is *metriōs,* which is a derivative from *metron*, "measure." It is not the word which I simply translate by "moderation," *sōphronōs*.[19] A good older commentator translates it here [as] "took care of the affairs of the city, always in the right manner." It does not have the peculiar moral implication which *sōphronōs*, "moderately," has.

Student: "Equitable"?

LS: No, not that. "Soberly," but it stresses a bit more the calculating element.

[xvi] Thucydides 2.65.

Same Student: "Measured"?

LS: "Measured" would be more literal. I don't know whether it would be as immediately intelligible in present-day English, that is the only question. But it is very important that he does not say moderately, *sōphronōs*, and that Pericles himself, in all [of] his three speeches, does not use this word "moderation," which occurs in almost all other speeches,[xvii] a single time. That is extremely remarkable. There is a connection between *sōphronōs*, which I would translate "moderately,"[20] [and] *aidōs*, the sense of reverence. There is no such connection between "measured" and reverence. That brings out perhaps more clearly what I say. Now the proof that this is something which is not characteristic of Pericles is of course the funeral speech itself. I mean, beginning with this nasty remark about the old *nomos*, you know, that is not the statement of a man characterized by reverence. The term of course occurs [. . .][xviii] [in] particular in Archidamus's speech—you know, the old Spartan king.[xix] Yes, go on.

Reader:
And after the war was on foot, it is manifest that he therein also foresaw what it could do. He lived after the war began two years and six months. And his foresight in the war was best known after his death.

LS: The "foresight," and now he uses this as a qualifier: "his foresight," I mean "his foresight in regard to the war." I overtranslate it to bring out the use of[21] [. . .] In other words, he had the best understanding of the war and the whole interior policy, but there are perhaps things which he did not understand.

Reader:
For he told them that if they would be quiet and look to their navy, and during this war seek no further dominion nor hazard the city itself, they should then have the upper hand. But they did contrary in all, and in such other things besides as seemed not to concern the war managed the state, according to their private ambition and covetousness, perniciously both for themselves and their confederates. What succeeded well the honour and profit of it came most to private men, and what miscarried was to the city's detriment in the war.

LS: That is a point which he develops at some length; unfortunately, we do not have the time to read it. That is the point: in Pericles's case, a complete coincidence between his private interest and the public interest; no such coincidence after. But there is one point we must read and that is a little bit later, what he says about Sicily.

Reader:
It was in name a state democratical, but in fact a government of the principal man. But they that came after, being more equal amongst themselves and

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[xvii] Strauss exaggerates considerably here.
[xviii] The transcript has blank space here.
[xix] Thucydides 1.84.

affecting everyone to be the chief, applied themselves to the people and let go the care of the commonwealth. From whence amongst many other errors, as was likely in a great and dominant city—

LS: "Great and imperial city."

Reader:
proceeded also the voyage into Sicily, which was not so much upon mistaking those whom they went against as for want of knowledge in the senders of what was necessary for those that went the voyage. For through private quarrels about who should bear the greatest sway with the people they both abated the vigour of the army and then also first troubled the state at home with division. Being overthrown in Sicily and having the city being in sedition,[xx] yet they held out three years—

LS: I believe that is probably an error of the manuscript tradition. The other suggested ten, because it was ten years.

Reader:
both against their first enemies and the Sicilians with them and against most of their revolted confederates besides, and also afterwards against Cyrus the king's son, who took part with and sent money to the Peloponnesians to maintain their fleet and never shrunk till they had overthrown themselves with private dissensions. So much was Pericles[xxi] above other men at that time that he could foresee by what means the city might easily have outlasted the Peloponnesians in this war.

LS: That is, I think, a very difficult statement. The first statement, [Pericles's supremely intelligent war policy], is to this effect:[22] We can easily win the war if we don't lose our nerves and don't gamble. And that is, I think, proven by the history. Athens wins this first round easily: she defends herself completely. And the second round is of course the Sicilian affair with its consequences. So Pericles is supremely intelligent: his moderation, as we could say. So Sicily was the idiotic thing, and that was due to the private ambition of the irresponsible Alcibiades. But then he corrects it as he goes on. Sicily was not impossible; Athens was so strong that she could have won the Sicilian campaign. And this is proven by the fact that even after the disaster in Sicily, Athens could hold out for nine more years, almost ten more years. So Sicily was not in itself absurd. What is then the mistake? More precisely, why did Sicily go wrong?

Student: There were not sufficient supplies.

LS: That is not the primary point.

[xx] In the original: "Being overthrown in Sicily and having lost, besides other ammunition, the greatest part of their navy, and the city being then in sedition." Thucydides 2.65.
[xxi] In the original: "So much was in Pericles." Thucydides 2.65.

Student: I would say the banishment of Alcibiades.

LS: Sure. And why was Alcibiades banished? He says "private reasons"; in other words, the enemies of Alcibiades. But to what did the enemies of Alcibiades appeal, and by virtue of what were they so successful? The impiety. And that is a very strange thing, that the Athenians, who were so very "unprejudiced"—you know, right of the stronger and all this kind of thing—had succeeded only in divorcing piety from a sense of justice. They preserved the piety in a kind of superstitious manner. You know: If something happens to these statues, it is absolutely terrible, but if we break an oath or so, or this kind of thing, that is not of the same order. I believe it had to do with that. That, I believe, is the point, and this is somehow connected with this issue of *sōphrosynē*. There is not this primary connection between piety and sense of right in Athens.

Now I don't believe that Thucydides himself was a pious man. I think we can find evidence of that. But he saw that what the Athenians did was an impossible separation. And there is also one particular point which we should perhaps consider in this chapter. "Now when he saw them to be untimely daring out of *hubris*, of insolent pride, then he brought them down by the speech. And on the other hand, when they were unreasonably fearful he encouraged them." Now again, do we find a single speech of Pericles, or a single utterance where Pericles attacks the Athenian pride? He says that he did, but I think it is also important that he does not give us a single example of it. On the whole, Pericles enforced the daring and gambling spirit of the Athenians rather than the moderation.

Coming back to the question of Athens and Sparta,[23] [it] is clear that Thucydides doesn't believe that either is simply just. Sparta and Athens represent different mixtures of justice and injustice, and they illustrate the essential necessity of that mixture but do not by themselves prove that necessity. Only the analysis of each case could prove it. For example, one would have to consider the connection between Spartan prudence [or] moderation and the fact that they had to be prudent because of the helots. You know? They could not take the risks that the Athenians took. I would venture to say that this *sōphrosynē*, moderation, is in a way the key term in Thucydides and takes the place of justice because unmitigated justice is impossible. Some injustice is inevitable. The criterion cannot be justice, therefore, but rather the degree of injustice, and that is moderation. And I believe this is indicated in the speech of the Athenians in Sparta, when they say: Of course we committed all sorts of unjust actions in acquiring our empire, but look how relatively decent we were as owners of an empire, and that is the only thing which can be reasonably expected. I believe that this contains something of Thucydides's own thoughts.

And now the story to which you referred. The Spartans start the murdering of innocent people, but the Athenians follow suit nevertheless. The description of when Potidaea is conquered—Potidaea is reduced in the last stage of the siege to cannibalism, which is mentioned in passing, but is also a sign of what happens with the breakdown coming inevitably with the war. The Plataean story will be taken up when we come to it next time. You saw also the importance of this remark in chapter 77 about the difference

between the manmade fire and the fire that came by itself. The human device has no effect, because water from heaven and thunders come in. Strangely, he doesn't speak of lightning.

There are two more points, I think, which we must discuss. The first are the two speeches before the naval battle. This, by the way, is extremely interesting, this naval battle which is described here, and the Athenians have at first an easy victory, but then against very heavy odds they in a sense lose. But strategically they win that battle, and interestingly enough, by the action of a single ship. That is an example of what Pericles meant: the capacity of the individual Athenian to act on his own. There is nothing of this kind on the Spartan side. But the speeches which are in chapters 87 and 89—you have seen, of course, that Brasidas is one of the commanders, although he is not the chief one there. In both cases, for those who are interested in this kind of thing,[24] Thucydides starts first with what the speakers intended with the speech, and then he gives the speech. This is always very helpful for an analysis. You can, as it were, figure out the speech for yourself, you know—this is what the speaker should have done—and then see where you were wrong, where something unexpected comes up in them.

Student: The most extraordinary thing about this pair of speeches is, I think,[25] the fact that Phormio, [in] the second one, he speaks almost as if he had been listening to what the Athenian[xxii] said.

LS: That is what Thucydides always does. That is constant, I mean, because the speech is meant to educate us and therefore it must be—you know, after we have heard the one side, we must hear the other as a reply. That happens always. The Spartans must admit in their speech the superior experience of the Athenians in naval warfare, but they say courage is more important than experience, implying that we are more courageous than the Athenians, and we have the largest number of boats. That is undeniably true; I think the proportion was four to one. Also, and this is only something to which they allude: you have better leadership in the present battle than you had in the last one. But this is of course not emphasized, because it would be ruinous to military morale, but it is clearly alluded [to]. And the Athenian commander, Phormio, a nice man[26]—he says the very number of the enemy is a compliment to your superiority: Why did they assemble so many boats if they were not afraid of you? Now let us read the end of the Spartan speech in 87 and contrast it with the parallel in Phormio's speech.

Reader:
With courage therefore, both masters and mariners, follow every man in his order, not forsaking the place assigned him. And for us, we shall order the battle as well as the former commanders—[xxiii]

LS: This is the allusion.

Reader:

[xxii] The student must have meant to say "what the Spartan said."
[xxiii] Thucydides 2. 87.

and leave no excuse to any man of his cowardice. And if any will needs to be a coward,[xxiv] he shall receive condign punishment; and the valiant shall be rewarded according to their merit.

LS: You see, while the proper emphasis is in a way on reward, they also make it clear that they will punish. Now let us see the parallel in the speech of Phormio, also at the end.

Reader:
In the meantime, keep you your order well in the galleys, and every man receive his charge readily; and the rather because the enemy is at anchor so near us. In the fight have in great estimation order and silence as things of great force in most military actions, especially in a fight by sea; and charge these your enemies according to the worth of your former acts. You are to fight for a great wager, either to destroy the hope of the Peloponnesian navies or to bring fear of the sea[xxv] nearer home to the Athenians.[xxvi]

LS: The Spartans appeal to punishment and reward of the individual; Phormio appeals to what is at stake for Athens. That is, I think, an important difference between the two speeches. For Sparta as a *polis* there was of course less at stake in a naval battle than for Athens. This explains the difference, I believe.

Student: Is it of significance that in Hobbes's translation[27] the Spartans are addressed as "men" and the Athenians as "soldiers"?

LS: No, no, no. Yes, there is a difference. The Spartan says "men of Peloponnesus"; the Athenian, "men, soldiers." You cannot imitate this in English, you know. Well, I give a wrong translation to make clear the difference: "You gentlemen from the Peloponnesus," "you gentlemen soldiers."

Student: Is it the same word?

LS: The same word. I do not know whether this was the ordinary formula. Oh yes, I know: in Socrates's *Apology*, for example, he addresses the judges not as "men of Athens," but "you men, judges"—not "gentlemen of Athens," but "gentleman judges." And now they are assembled not as judges or for any other political function, but as soldiers, so they are addressed as soldiers. I think that is probably the reason.[28]

This story about the naval affairs in chapters 79 to 94 shows clearly that Athenian sea power is absolutely unimpaired and that no change has taken place.

Student: Earlier in the speech by Archidamus, he tells the Spartans to be extremely moderate and careful in this expedition and never look down with disdain on your

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[xxiv] In the original: "if any will needs be a coward"
[xxv] In the original: "or to bring the fear of the sea"
[xxvi] Thucydides 2.89.

enemies too quickly, because otherwise smaller numbers with greater fear may destroy the greater number.

LS: Yes, but that had something to do with the very great cautiousness and diffidence of Archidamus himself; he didn't believe in the necessity of the war and the justice of the war, and he was still wondering if the war could not be avoided altogether. You remember, he still sends someone to Athens in order to make a last-minute effort for peace.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, I know that. We discussed that, that this was an amazing speech for a commander, for a senior commander to address to his troops: Caution, caution, at all costs.[xxvii] And he even contradicts himself in one speech, because he says nothing is more dangerous than anger or passion. And that is true of the Spartans, but that the Athenians might out of anger and passion assail the Spartans and have success in that, he admits. So I think that is only to show how strong the peace party in Sparta was: even the king in command of the army didn't like the whole thing. I mean, that a certain degree of caution is absolutely necessary for military success is clear, but that went beyond that and showed an unwillingness to take the absolutely necessary risks.

Now the last section of this second book deals with affairs in the north in Thrace and Macedonia, and there is here—we cannot read everything of course—toward the end of 97, when he speaks of the very great power which the Thracians and Scythians have. Read only the last two or three sentences of chapter 97.

Reader:
For there is no nation, not to say of Europe but neither of Asia, that are comparable to this, or that as long as they agree, are able, one nation to one, to stand against the Scythians. And yet in matter of counsel and wisdom in the present occasions of life, they are not like to other men.

LS: One more passage, in chapter 100, near the beginning—begin from the beginning.

Reader:
The Macedonians, unable to stand in the field against so huge an army, retired all within their strongholds and walled towns, as many as the country afforded, which were not many then, but were built afterwards by Archelaus the son of Perdiccas when he came to the kingdom, who then also laid out the highways straight and took order both for matter of war, as horses and arms and for other provision, better than all the other eight kings that were before him.

[xxvii] Strauss here refers back to Archidamus's speech at 2.11.

LS: By the way, this Archelaus is probably known to you from Plato's *Gorgias*, where he is described as an absolutely abominable tyrant.[xxviii] There is no other evidence for this though—Polus says that, not Socrates, and Polus is a rhetorician who probably exaggerates. He was known, Archelaus, as a lover of Euripides and other Athenian poets, and even Socrates was invited to his court but didn't go. But this in passing. Now if you take these two passages together, do you see[29] that the very great power in the north, and also the very quick and recent changes there—you know that Archelaus alone did more than all the kings who preceded him—big changes which do not yet show are in the making? I think that is very important. That is also meant to balance the description of the present power of Athens, and it reads like a divination of the very great change which took place within a very short time, when the Macedonians came down. I don't believe that the point is that Thucydides was a soothsayer and anticipated Philip, but that he anticipated fundamental changes. That is I think proved by this account. That is important.

Student: There is a point here in the north—the detail with which he goes into it and his observations and so on. It is interesting that [. . .] and this is where he spent his time when he was in exile.

LS: That only explains why he would have known of these things, but that would not explain why he mentions them in this detail. Now this is linked up with another point in chapter 102, say, after the first third roughly—in the whole chapter, as a matter of fact—[where] he describes[30] another change taking place but not a political change: a natural change, the formation of a continent from what were formerly only islands. Will you perhaps read that?

Reader:
Also most of the islands Echinades lie just over against Oenia, hard by the mouth of Achelöus. And the river, being a great one, continually heapeth together the gravel, insomuch that some of those islands are become continent already; and the like in short time is expected by the rest. For not only the stream of the river is swift, broad, and turbidous, but also the islands themselves stand thick, and, because the gravel cannot pass, are joined one to another, lying in and out, not in a direct line nor so much as to give the water his course directly forward into the sea. These islands are all desert and but small ones. It is reported that Apollo by his oracle did assign this place for an habitation to Alcmaeon the son of Amphiaraus, at such time as he wandered up and down for the killing of his mother, telling him "that he should never be free from the terrors that haunted him till he had found out and seated himself in such a land as when he slew his mother, the sun had never seen nor was then land because all other lands were polluted by him." Hereupon being at a nonplus, as they say, with much ado he observed this ground congested by the river Achelöus and thought there was enough cast up to serve his turn already since the time of the slaughter of his mother, after which it was now a long time that he had been a wanderer. Therefore, seating himself in the places

[xxviii] *Gorgias* 470d-471d.

about the Oeniades, he reigned there and named the country after the name of his son Acarnas.[xxix] Thus goes the report, as we have heard it concerning Alcmaeon.

LS: I think that is not the only place of this kind[31] [in which] Thucydides gives first a report about a natural event and then adds an account of the myth. And in the myth of course he refers only to what is said; in the case of the natural event,[32] [there is] no qualifying expression of this kind. But to come back to the proper context, there is here a natural change, a relatively slow change; and before we have seen a political change, a change effected in one generation. Archelaus alone was revolutionary. And this must be kept as a background of Thucydides. You see, today when we speak of an historian, however dedicated the historian may be and careful and not trusting anything he does not know, he is of course, I suppose, in almost all cases—he accepts the results of modern science which he has learned in school or in college as a matter of course. That is a background, what he knows. In the case of Gomme, one of the best modern commentators on Thucydides, he goes even beyond that, but he had a firm belief in the crucial importance of the so-called economic factor.[xxx] But that is one special case. In other words, every historian has such things he believes or assumes.

The case of Thucydides is that he brings out explicitly his assumptions by such casual remarks on the proper occasion; for example, this thing which is trivial and not trivial: Here, your horizon is closed by the fight between these two greatest Greek powers, Athens and Sparta. But of course you know there is also a Persian Empire somewhere which is not defeated by any means. That is what we know, that is our horizon. And he adds this warning that after fifty years the picture will not be recognizable anymore. And that is always the case. I don't know whether I told this class a little thing which struck me very much. Bismarck, who was a very old hand at politics, gives at the end of his life a description of the political-international scene and an estimate of Russia, France, Great Britain, Italy, Austria-Hungary, what they will do to Germany and so [on], and of course [all] very thoughtful and based on long experience.[xxxi] And he had the last word on the subject—and not even a mention of Japan. That was written, say, in 1895; nine years later, Japan defeats Russia and becomes one of the big powers. It is possible, as some people [think], that surprises of this magnitude are no longer possible because of the elevated opinions of politics[33] [about] industrial and economic means, and that they can somehow be figured out. I do not know. Perhaps it is so, but I think in former times surely it was rather different. Surprises came. But Thucydides warns us that there is not only this kind of surprises coming through political action; there are also the natural changes, of which one cannot tell which of them may affect human life very promptly.

Student: I would like to raise a question [. . .]

[xxix] A seeming error of Hobbes's. The son's name was Acarnan.

[xxx] A. W. Gomme (1886-1959), author of *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (5 vols., 1945-1981, completed by other scholars) for many years the standard modern commentary on Thucydides in English.

[xxxi] Strauss refers to Bismarck's *Thoughts and Memories.*

LS: Yes, but the same Thucydides succeeded marvelously in describing the end, the last dying kicks of the Athenians in Sicily after the strategic position was at fault, and I regard it as perfectly within the power of Thucydides that he could have written a most moving description of the taking down of the walls of Athens and of the Spartans entering Athens' heart. I mean, a very simple journalist describing Hitler marching in triumph through the Arch of Triumph in Paris—I mean, this should have been easily within Thucydides's power. Well, of course I would never say this in print because I am a reasonably prudent man, but I myself believe that the end as we have it is the end.

Same Student: But this is what I'm saying.

LS: Yes, but that means that Thucydides deliberately abstained from presenting the end, and that this had a kind of Homeric moral in the fact that Homer does not describe the fall of Troy. You know we have a description of the Trojan War some time before the fall of Troy and then [of] what happened after the fall of Troy in the *Odyssey*. But you have no description of the fall of Troy itself, and what Homer's reasons were I do not know, but I am sure he had his good reasons. And in Homer of course the main point was that not Troy but Achilles is the hero, but in Thucydides's work the city is the hero and not an individual. The thing is different.

Same Student: This is the other alternative. Let one assume that it is unfinished, and then you've got to imagine what would have followed it and make your ideas about the shape from what has been suggested. All you can say is, "This is the end of it," and then try to see what the shape of it is as we have it. I am not at all certain that you couldn't argue that[34] as we have it it does have—[not in the sense of being a strict sort of tragedy]—some striking analogies to the Homeric tragedy.

LS: There is no question about that, but the point is that while we must be sensitive to these things, we must also be precise. You know, an analogy to tragedy—I mean, I do not now take a very narrow view and say if it is not in meter and doesn't have the names of persons at the beginnings of the lines and so on, of course not, but I think we must take it somewhat more strictly.

Same Student: But if you think of *hubris* and *nemesis*, you have this very nicely drawn out, I thought, between books 2 and 7: all these fine words in book 2, and they meet their comeuppance, as it were—

LS: Yes, true, that has often been said, and that is absolutely striking. I mean, also the funeral speech and then the plague—it is surely *hubris* and nemesis, and then in another way the Athenians in Melos and then the Sicilian catastrophe. There is no question that these things are there, but they are integrated into a whole of which these tragic elements are a part, and therefore it is not as a whole a tragedy. You know? We are speaking of the whole now and not of the elements. There are also, by the way, comical elements. You have seen one yourself.

Same Student: I was thinking, though, that you could say the same thing—in the same way you could say that the *Iliad* is not a tragedy.

LS: Of course I would say that.

Same Student: I'm only trying to clear up terminology here. I would say that this is as much a tragedy as the *Iliad* is, and I would want to say that it is a legitimate use of the word tragedy.

LS: But then there is this beautiful remark of Averroes in his commentary on the *Poetics* which is unforgettable to me. You know the Arabs had no tragedy and comedy, but he of course understood Aristotle very well and understood from Aristotle what a tragedy [was] and [what a] comedy was, and then after he explained them he came to the conclusion that there are tragedies and comedies in the Koran. In other words, there are sections of the Koran which, if you take them by themselves, could [be] said to be at least the *sujet* of either a comedy or a tragedy. In this case I think we would say that he goes a bit far, and you go too much in that way.

Regarding Homer, I must say that I would hesitate to apply any term, any general term to him. Of course, since at least Aristotle and probably before, Homer is catalogued as epic poetry. And that is true, I suppose, up to the present day. Hegel's *Aesthetics* ranks Homer as the greatest epic poet. Someone made a study of certain things in Homer, and having shown it to one of the most intelligent scholars of our age,[35] [this scholar] blamed this study because he does not read Homer as an epic poem. And I raised this question: How does this gentleman know that Homer wrote the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as epic poems? In other words, what it means in practice is this, of course: You know something about epic poetry, say, among the southern Slavs, which of course doesn't reach the level of Homer, but some rudiments of it. And then you have the *Nibelungen* song in medieval German and many other things, and the stories of knights and maidens, and so [on] and so on, and of course great battles. This is heroic poetry; it exists probably everywhere. Yes, but how can you apply the general concept which you as a comparative literary historian derived from this evidence—how can you apply this to Homer? Homer didn't have that concept of epic poetry; at least we don't know that he did. But he tells us very clearly what he is doing in these two poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and we have to do it on this basis. You can say that that is very pedantic. I believe it is very useful, what I've said, because the general term "epic poetry" is really a schematic expression, and when you give it any richer meaning you have already to show—to prove—that this is applicable to Homer in particular. You know? Well, in the case of Virgil you can say it, because Virgil practically said that he imitated Homer. And this category of epic poetry existed by Virgil's time and of course in Dante's and in Milton's time, but for Homer himself you cannot do it.

Student: I don't like to be troublesome, but I would want to distinguish among epics, that some are tragic and others are not. The *Odyssey*, for instance, is not tragic, the *Iliad* is. Does this help me at all?

LS: I mean, you can easily prove it, and you can even—if a man is as witty as you are, you can easily make ridiculous an old pedant like myself who denies it, because I would ultimately be driven back to this simple statement: Where do you find the notion of tragic in Homer? And then you of course say: Well, you silly old man. I don't believe it is this, because I have this prejudice that however defective even the greatest human beings are, they always find the word for what is most important to them. I mean, there is a large literature on the question[36] [of] the discovery of history in the Old Testament. I raise a very simple question: Tell me a word in biblical Hebrew which can properly be translated by "history"? You can't find it. You can find a word for "chronicles," surely, but that is not history. But these same people who never spoke of history and couldn't speak of history spoke all the time of justice or righteousness. That was so important for them that they had a word for it. And I don't believe that this is philological pedantry, but it is simply an attempt to understand and to make clear where we are ordinarily satisfied with a familiar word which has gone through millions of hands, or rather mouths, and has not become—how shall I say it?—clearer, clearer and more entire by the process of handling over. One cannot do that all the time; one has to give, for example, introductory lectures and do all such things, and if you would begin with the utmost austerity there would be no bridge between the professor and the student. But granted a beginning, and especially if one is in graduate school one should begin to think of these things. But I could give you really any example; it is so easy to see in Shorey's edition of the *Republic*, for example.[xxxii] It so simple all the time to speak of "ideal"—you know, an "ideal": "ideal justice," or what have you. It is so easy, and why should one spoil these old children's games? And yet I think it is terribly important to make clear that there is no such term in Plato and try therefore to begin to think about what we mean by an ideal, which is perhaps not something on which we have thought very much, but also: What would Plato have called that, what we call "ideal"? I believe it pays in the long run. But this does not mean that one should not see as clearly as one possibly can this dramatic character—if you please, tragic character—of Thucydides's *History* and point this out. But when things become serious, you know, when you have to "bust the case wide open," if I may quote Perry Mason, then you must drop these facile terms. [. . .][xxxiii] I believe it always pays. Just as even apart from this question of his own understanding, you know, every one of you, if you take the trouble in going over a paper or something which you wrote and really look at every word, whether it is the best word that you could have used or not, it doesn't do any harm. And here even more so, because Thucydides probably invested more work or a greater intelligence than most of us have, and also can afford, in this book. After all, it is an amazing thing that a man of his capacity wrote in his whole life no more than these seven hundred pages.

Student: May I ask a question in this context? What happened to methodology?

LS: What do you mean by methodology? If you mean by methodology reflection on how one proceeds reasonably in certain kinds of scholarly pursuits, then I would say that methodology is in principle possible. But only if it follows work—you know, one cannot

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[xxxii] Paul Shorey (1857-1934), American scholar, translator of Plato's *Republic* in the Loeb Classical Library edition and author of numerous works on Plato and many other subjects.
[xxxiii] The transcript has a blank space here.

begin with methodology; that is impossible. But if you have done some work and have seen that this led to something, and this way led nowhere, and you think a bit about it: How did I proceed? And especially if you have some longer experience, not the experience of a master's thesis but of some years of such thinking, then I believe it is useful. So as it were, an old wanderer would tell people generally not what he found on his wanderings, but as it were what equipment you might want if you wander through this kind of mountains.

Student: It is a tribute, it seems to me, to Thucydides's urbanity or fastidiousness that he never enters into any kind of polemical discussion with those who might disagree with him.

LS: But he does! Does he not say some nasty words about Homer and about the earlier writers and this kind of thing?

Student: But he leaves everyone to think these things through for himself, what Thucydides did. And if one understands this eternal possession and if it is going to be useful for him—it seems to me to point to a systematic understanding of things.

LS: Yes, but "system," even this "system" didn't exist in ancient times; in late antiquity the term comes up. You mean his overall—but he makes it rather clear that it isn't—when you open the book you are confronted by this massive antithesis which is probably destroyed in the translation but very clear in the Greek: motion and rest. Well, you can say that is very crude and much too broad to be helpful, but when you follow it up you can see the refinements which gradually obtrude. You see that it is truly helpful, and you find also others of these fundamental oppositions. Thucydides, I think, gives us all the information we need for understanding him. That does not mean that we make the proper use of it, or that anyone has succeeded in giving a completely clear and lucid account of every passage in Thucydides, which may be due in some cases to merely chance, that a certain passage is corrupt, and that is possible. But it is very interesting to see that today the classical scholars respect the transmitted text much more than they did about fifty to sixty years ago. At that time they were very eager [to say]: That is not Greek! Period. But in the meantime they have seen that Thucydides might have taken certain liberties with his native language, of which classical grammarians don't[37] [speak] and other things of this kind. But there [are] always such difficulties. Then of course the question comes up and must be faced: Is the *History* finished? I mean, I have a kind of simple faith that it was finished, because I have seen funny, funny things which we would not expect [from] the kind of people who ought to know better. I will give you the most simple example, for which I have been ridiculed by some nice friends. Thucydides's *History* was in a way, of course, unfinished: he doesn't give you the full history of the Peloponnesian War. And it was continued by someone else called Xenophon, and Xenophon wrote a book called *Greek History*, *Hellenica*, which takes up the history where Thucydides finished it or left it unfinished. By the way, the preponderant view today is that Thucydides is here and Xenophon is here [LS gestures, presumably indicating a disparity of heights]. Xenophon is a retired colonel, you know, who had listened to Socrates and understood a few words,

but nothing serious—you know, an enthusiastic colonel, unintelligent, and wholly uninspiring and uninspired. A man—a blimp.[xxxiv]

Now look, what does Xenophon do? Xenophon's history, we know how it begins. It begins with the word "thereafter." The first word is "thereafter." And people say: Naturally, this is a continuation: it begins with thereafter. Now I ask anyone, would you ever deam, in writing a continuation,[38] [of] begin[ning] your book with the word "thereafter"? This is not an ordinary continuator, the man who does these things. He takes an enormous liberty, and in addition, the "thereafter"—the first event is not the event immediately following the end of Thucydides, but it overlaps, say, the last five pages of Thucydides. It overlaps with it! And not only that, the book ends with the word "thereafter." That cannot of course be literally true. It happens in this way: he describes the Battle of Leuctra, and then Xenophon says that everyone had expected that if this battle was won there would be peace, beauty, United Nations, and what have you, "after." But on second thought, there was as great a confusion as there was before. Thus, "what happens thereafter," he finishes, "he who is interested in it may read writings elsewhere." So you see: "Thereafter—thereafter." And the point is here: "confusion; thereafter, confusion." Thereafter, confusion. You can say it is not a very profound philosophy, but it is one which is not negligible even for us who have been somewhat corrupted by a kind of sweeping philosophies of history—you know, where you find order everywhere—to hear someone say there is always confusion. At any rate, the point is: that Thucydides should end his book with "Tissaphernes went up to Ephesus and sacrificed to Artemis," which is contrary to all reasonable expectations of this book,[xxxv] is not as strange to me—especially on the basis of this experience of Xenophon and other things of this kind.

And there is even another point—well, I will omit that now on this occasion, but I have a more specific reason why I believe that the end is exactly as we have it. Thucydides—we have not yet come across this; we have a place where we have mentioned it. You know he always says, "That was the end of year number one, number five, number *n* of the war," and then he says ordinarily, "of the war which Thucydides has described." But he uses this group of words, "which Thucydides has described," not in all cases. And if one draws up a complete list of it, whether he mentions his name there or does not mention it, one discerns a pattern. And this pattern—I will take this up on a later occasion—and in the light of this pattern I think one can see that the end is a reasonable end to this book. A mathematical demonstration, of course, is not possible. But I mentioned this before. These people who say Thucydides didn't finish it—and perhaps there is some old tradition that he did not finish it, that it had to be edited after his death—that the man does not finish the book does not mean that he had not written the last sentence. These are people who write this way,[39] they write [the] first and [the] last sentence before they write or fill in between. You know? They want to know where they are going. And Thucydides might very well have written the last sentence long before he had completed every individual sentence to his satisfaction in between. But both things are in themselves merely hypothetical, and the only thing one can do is try to understand whether this does

[xxxiv] Strauss's reference is to Colonel Blimp, a character created in 1934 by the British cartoonist D. M Low who became proverbial for reactionary and jingoistic views.
[xxxv] The work thus ends with a Persian satrap sacrificing to a Greek deity, a unique instance in it.

make sense. But I talk much too much. Do you have any questions? I hope there will be no eternal enmity.

Session 6: January 22, 1962
Book 3, Chapters 1-52

Leo Strauss: You also made the mistake, if it is a mistake, of speaking much more about Thucydides's whole view than about the specific things which there were in your assignment.[i] From the somewhat pedantic point of view which I must have, being responsible for the seminar, it is a mistake, but it is also a qualification which one might question. What you said about the relation of the speech of the Mytilenaeans in Olympia to the speech of the Corcyraeans in Athens was very good, and also generally speaking what you said about the issue in Athens between Cleon and Diodotus. I was not able to understand what you said about this question concerning the work as a whole. "If necessity is all-inclusive, what is the practical use of Thucydides's history?" Is this what you said? Now what was your answer? I didn't understand it.

Student: Well, if necessity is all-inclusive, as it is in the first case, there is only one possible precept, and even that perhaps doesn't have the status of a precept—that is to say, that it can be practically applied by thoughtful men.

LS: On what did you base your condition that necessity is all-inclusive? I mean, if you said necessity is all-inclusive, no practical precepts can be given, no practical lessons can be drawn. On what did you base the premise of the condition that necessity is all-inclusive? Does Thucydides ever say so?

Same Student: No, of course not, but I explained that this is a possible view to take due to the almost impossible difficulty—very great difficulty—in seeing what Thucydides's preferences are.

LS: Yes, but what does Thucydides in fact mean by this statement in the twenty-second chapter of the first book, to which you refer?

Same Student: Well, that is also another indication in favor of that argument. I didn't try to associate myself with that argument. But at any rate, according to his own stated purpose, he expected it to be of use.

LS: Yes, but what does he say there about the fact that this is a useful possession for all times, his *History*? What does he mean by that?

Same Student: Well, he follows that by saying that one can understand the future better if one understands the past.

LS: But what does he mean when he says the future? Is it that you can predict what will come in the next thirty years out of this Cold War, or what did he have in mind? Did he say that the understanding of his history permits one to predict? Did he mean that?

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Same Student: I don't think so. But a good understanding of history would help you to determine what would probably be the consequence of a certain situation. I suppose it has something to do with the understanding of man and man's nature.

LS: But to what extent does it mean necessity, as you seem to suggest?

Same Student: Well, if one tries to make any sense out of what he says about rest and motion—he doesn't have to say anything about them as such, but you can use the word—it is difficult not to see that out of two such principles a necessary course of events wouldn't arise.

LS: Yes, but in which sense necessary? That is the point. Let us take a very schematic view that if *n* + *n* rest and *n* + *n* motion are 100 - *n* rest at a given time, is this what he means? That you can figure out if you have this compilation of rest and motion, these things will necessarily follow, and if you have another compilation, then these other things will follow in the way in which some present-day social scientists would understand it or might understand it? What does he mean? I don't believe that the word "necessity" is very helpful, but if one would say the limits are clear, become clear, that I think he believes. He claims to see the limits within which the political possibilities of men will be locked in all times. But to what extent is it useful to know these limits?

Same Student: Well, I suggested naïvely—

LS: One cannot be naïve enough.

Same Student: That Athens and Sparta do represent extremes, extreme political alternatives.

LS: Of course Thucydides would not exclude that the next time there might be some difference in the arrangement of the elements. But look, let us start from the simple fact that there are many people in our century who found the reading of Thucydides eminently helpful for finding their way in our twentieth century. That is, I think, what Thucydides wanted it to be. What is it, what makes Thucydides so useful? In other words, I would say that it is clearer to start from this common experience which so many people today have[1] [had]. I would count myself among the many, but there are many more. That is what he means. To look, for example, at what Thucydides did: there were two wars, legally, from 431 to 421, and then there was peace, and then there began a new war, say, roughly [in] 415, which lasted then until 404. And Thucydides said it was one war, one war; and this peace cannot be regarded as a peace. In 1918 or 1919, when the Versailles Peace Treaty was concluded, the French General Foch said: This is not a peace, this is an armistice for twenty years."He was literally correct, because in 1939 the Second World War started. So Thucydides, in other words, would tell us that it is one war, starting in 1914 and lasting until 1945, and he would say, drawing attention to the fact that while in the First World War it was of course a gross exaggeration to say that Germany was the aggressor, whereas she surely was the aggressor in the Second World War, both wars were

emphatically German wars. Although in the First World War it was much more complicated; it was the last attempt of this very great power to break out of the continental European bounds and[2] try to become a world power in the British style or something of this sort. This kind of perspective I think is the minimum you can derive from Thucydides: to take a sober, broad view of a situation and not to be unduly impressed by what is now called the ideological. This Peloponnesian War was officially a war of liberation of Greece, as Thucydides makes very clear, and Thucydides has some serious doubts whether this can be said, but from the narrow point of view which was demonstrable, it was. They were chafing, the so-called allies, to get rid of Athenian control, but he doesn't believe that this is the key to the war[3]: [the] key to the war is Sparta, Sparta's fear of Athens, or else Athens' expansion. Well, one can elaborate on this, and then one comes ultimately into more truly universal things, because these were all particulars of a certain situation, namely, that these forces which Thucydides finds there that he was sure of, these are the forces which always determine the life of the cities. And he was sure of that: there cannot be new or qualitatively different ones. And that is of course a key question, but that Thucydides was right, that [he] could assert that one could not understand the Crusades, for example, in different terms—[that] would be a question, whether he is right there—but I think he would pretend that.

Well, that is a long question, and the main point I would like to make with a view to the future papers is that one should try to stick a bit more closely to the assignment, because there is so very much in it to learn before we can attack the bigger questions. Before I turn to our assignment, I would like to take up the methodological subject which came up last time. Now there is nothing to laugh about, because "methodological" simply means "how to proceed," and that is a question which everyone must face sooner or later. In our particular case, the question of how to proceed means how to read Thucydides. Now there is one thing which I would say that one cannot esteem highly enough, and that is first overall impressions. That is something of the very greatest importance, that one have the naïveté to surrender to the first impression, and not to be snobbish but to surrender to it. One must regard the surface of the work as absolutely sacred, and be a very good child. One cannot be good enough. You can also state the same thing in more dignified language by coming back to some old terms in this form coined by Aristotle: "We must start from what is first for us." You can say "the first impressions," because what is first in itself, the true principles—that becomes accessible to us only by a careful ascent from what is first for us to what is first in itself. Now in our case, what is first for us would of course be the Thucydidean principles, you know, which are indicated by such words as "motion" and "rest," words which are not very helpful because of their very great generality, but to understand what these terms mean, the specific meaning, we have to ascend from what is obviously given. In other words, not only must one not try to be clever, but one must try not to be clever, if you see the difference. That I think is somehow elementary. I have read once a very good definition of snobbishness in a contemporary British writer: snobbism is the contempt for the common merely because it is common. For example, air is very common, but to despise air on this ground is stupid. Bread is very common—or at least in these affluent societies—and to [have] contempt [for] it as such is, again, extraordinary. One must be truly simple.

Now if we start from these overall impressions, we will always reach the conclusion that was the great merit of Mr. Morrison's paper: the splendor and brilliance of Athens. And the most brilliant speech in the whole work is surely the funeral speech, and the most beautiful, quotable sentences, true sentences—"We love the beautiful without profligacy, and we love wisdom without effeminacy"—and such other sayings that are unforgettable. And of course, last but not least, the brilliance of Athens' tragedy coming out particularly in the Sicilian expedition. Sparta, one can say, is as unable to be a tragic hero as a statesman, if I may quote, or misquote, a modern tragic poet. Very well, [4]and that must be developed at the greatest length and in the greatest detail, and some points we will even find today. I think the third book is[5] [the] most devastating criticism of Sparta that could possibly be written, the story of strictly parallel events, Plataea and Mytilene, where Plataea is destroyed by the Spartans in an absolutely brutal manner, Mytilene escapes by a hair's breadth, but she does escape. And above all, in Athens there is at least a debate: Should Mytilene be destroyed or not? In the case of Plataea there is not even a debate, [merely] a brutal command, and other things of the same kind. So the case for this interpretation is very, very strong, and the first impression of the book, something which is always very important, is absolutely in favor of it.

The only thing one can say on very general grounds is this: there is another kind of first impression apart from these first impressions, and they are in a way more surface, more superficial, and more sacred on this ground, and that is what Thucydides himself says. Now all these things of which I spoke before are impressions which a reasonable reader will derive from Thucydides. But Thucydides never says so; the statements of Thucydides himself, what he explicitly says especially in book 1 and book 8, these statements are definitely in favor of Sparta. The first great statement in the Archaeology about Sparta is that she was never subject to tyrants and never had civil war, and later on in the eighth book, she is the only city which succeeded in combining prosperity with moderation. [This] is also to be considered. It seems to me that these things which Thucydides himself says, where we have it straight from the horse's mouth, that this must be our starting point, our basis, and only on this basis can we have an interpretation of Thucydides's whole work which is not open to the objection of[6] impressionism. Surely these explicit statements of Thucydides are very narrow, they supply a very narrow basis. These statements must be deepened; they may even have to be modified or construed, but one cannot do this in a methodic[al] manner, in a responsible manner, if one does not start from the explicit utterances of the author. This modification of what Thucydides himself says follows a principle stated by Thucydides himself. There are these remarks about Sparta to which I refer, these are the Thucydidean speech[es]. But no speech is as trustworthy as the deeds, so even Thucydides's own speech must be understood in the light of the deeds as he records them. But these speeches must be one of these things which you firmly plant in the soil to put your ropes around—if this is a proper simile, but I am sure that you will understand what I mean.

Now we turn to our section, the first sixty-eight chapters of the third book. Is this in agreement with the person who takes the next section?[ii] I see, only to chapter 52. Well, the first sixty-eight chapters, at any rate, tell us the story of Mytilene and of Plataea, and

[ii] Strauss refers to the students' writing assignments.

this is the illustration of Athens and Sparta. The common feature: the Mytilenaeans are deserted by the Spartans and the Plataeans are deserted by the Athenians, and this is due to the fact that Sparta is weak on the sea and therefore cannot reach Mytilene, and that the Athenians are weak without the sea and therefore cannot rescue Plataea. [LS goes to the map and points out Athens and Plataea, and Mytilene on the island of Lesbos.][iii] Now the difference is this, however: the Plataeans are attacked by the Spartans merely because they are loyal to the Athenians, their allies, whereas the Mytilenaeans are attacked by the Athenians because they are disloyal to Athens; they are under treaty obligation to Athens. So the true parallel to what the Spartans do to the Plataeans is not what the Athenians do to the Mytilenaeans but what they will later do to the Melians at the end of the first book—you know, Melos not being an ally of Athens. And furthermore, the Spartans destroy the Plataeans without debate, whereas the Athenians debate about the destruction of Mytilene and then even abstain, against all expectations, from destroying Mytilene.

The first speech there is the speech of the Mytilenaeans in Olympia on the Peloponnesus, in which they try to gain the help of the Peloponnesians. Now they are in an awkward situation because they have deserted their ally; they must defend themselves because to desert one's allies was regarded as indecent. That is of course not quite enough, because there is also calculation there because the desertion requires a new alliance. How can you get new allies if you have the reputation as a deserter of your old allies? Therefore you have to show that the case there was entirely different than the present. The Greek law, they say, the custom, is that the betrayal of allies, while being useful to the other side, the side to which you turn, is a low thing. The Mytilenaeans must show that this custom or law is not universally just—in other words, impossible to deviate from. Now at the beginning of chapter 10 they state the theme. Will you look it up?

Reader:
"For the first point of our speech, especially now we seek to come into league with you, shall be to make good the justice and honesty of our revolt. For we know there can be neither firm friendship between man and man nor any communion between city and city to any purpose whatsoever without a mutual opinion of each other's honesty, and also a similitude of customs otherwise; for in the difference of minds is grounded the diversity of actions."

LS: So you see what they say here is the first theme, but there appears there is no second theme; or more precisely, there is only one theme explicitly mentioned. The second theme is not explicit, and this first theme is the Mytilenaean proofs of their justice and honesty. The other theme, which of course is important—how useful their betrayal of the Athenians is to the Spartans—is not emphasized because that is elementary. There is also another interesting point in chapter 11, where they say that mutual fear is the only reliable thing in alliances; that is chapter 11, and then let us read the beginning of chapter 12:

Reader:
"What friendship then or assurance of liberty was this when we received each other with alienated affections: when whilst they had wars, they for fear

[iii] As noted by the transcriber.

courted us; and when they had peace, we for fear courted them: and whereas in others good will assureth loyalty, in us it was the effect of fear?"

LS: You see, is it not a flagrant contradiction to say that the only solid alliances are based on mutual fear and then to say that an alliance based on fear is an insincere friendship and an insincere alliance? I think the first passage about fear as the only solid basis implies that the principles stated by the Athenians in Sparta—you remember that, in the first book—are the true principles. You know, everyone tries to get as much as he can, and if he is wise he stops when he has reached the limit, but that is about all. Everyone has the will to transgress. That is somewhere stated here. Everyone has the will to transgress. As Hobbes put it later in his own works [. . .],[iv] the will to hurt is inherent in all, and surely in Thucydides.

The Mytilenaeans therefore have transgressed, that is the consequence of that, and surely there is no sincere friendship between the cities. The dilemma of the Mytilenaeans should be briefly considered. First, is it regarded [as] indecent to betray one's allies when they are in trouble? [This is] still immediately intelligible, in spite of all historical change. Good, perhaps no accident. Now how do they reply to that? "But we were the allies of the Athenians only under duress; hence, we were not really allies." But this has a grave implication: "If we were the allies of the Athenians only under duress, that means that we are weak; hence, we are not attractive to the Spartans as allies." You see already the contradiction, which I observe goes back to a deeper contradiction. They are in an embarrassing situation. But this is not the end of the story. No, we can see the Mytilenaeans continue their argument: The Athenians had as much fear of us as we had of them. Such mutual fear is the only safe bond among allies, as we have said. You Spartans also must fear our power, if it remains united with that of Athens. To which the Spartans could object: If you were so strong, why did you help the Athenians in their criminal proceedings against the liberty of Greece for such a long time? To which the Mytilenaeans reply, [in] chapter 9: The Athenians treated us so well. To which the Spartans would probably say: Well, then, you had no objections to these criminal proceedings as long as you profited from them. Well, it is a tough situation, and so the Mytilenaeans must be presumed to continue as follows: Well, let us abandon all these pretenses. We are gentlemen, we are decent people, we acted under duress, we are weak, we come as supplicants, we are filled with fear." That is the end of the speech, chapter 14.

Reader:
In reverence therefore of the hopes which the Grecians have reposed in you and of the presence of Jupiter Olympius, in whose temple here we are in a manner suppliants to you, receive the Mytilenaeans into league and aid us. And do not cast us off, who (though, as to the exposing of our persons, the danger be our own) shall bring a common profit to all Greece if we prosper and a more common detriment to all the Grecians if, through your

[iv] The transcript has a lengthy blank space here.

inflexibleness, we miscarry. Be you therefore men such as the Grecians esteem you and our fears require you to be.[v]

LS: "Our fear." You know, now they have put the cards on the table. But the beauty of this speech is—if one analyzes it, and my analysis was far from sufficient—you can get a complete dialogue, as it were, of the Mytilenaeans and the Spartans within [it],[7] and the end of it is complete collapse. They are compelled to be honest because they are in such a hopeless situation. Why are they in a hopeless situation? They started too soon. They gave away the trump card. They would have been in a much better position if the Spartans had come to them, cap in hand, and said: Please desert the Athenians. But they were already in this terrible situation and so they needed the Spartan help, and they could of course not get it. They cannot get it for the simple military reason. In chapter 16 Thucydides describes[8] [how] the Spartans soon discover the mistaken calculation of the Mytilenaeans, but this is said in chapter 16. The interesting thing here is the implications. The Spartans did not discover that from the speech of the Mytilenaeans. When we read the speech carefully, we see however how mistaken they were. But the Spartans were not such good orators, or readers of orations, to be able to discern it from that.

Student: Would you repeat what the Spartans would have replied to the Mytilenaeans when they say that they stuck with Athens because they were well treated by Athens?

LS: That means that in the circumstances you were well treated by criminals. That the Athenians are criminals is presupposed. But who is well treated by criminals but an accomplice of criminals? You see here the true beauty—and in a way the Mytilenaeans are decent men. The impression that our speaker had that they are much more decent than the Corcyraeans is, I think, very true. But there are depths below depths. Someone may be much nicer than someone else and still not be nice enough.

We come now to the story we cannot possibly read, the story of Plataea. Plataea is under siege by the Peloponnesians. It is a very exciting adventure story of the break they make: about four hundred men break out and come safely to Athens. That is very interesting, but unfortunately we cannot read that. Only there is one thing in chapter 20, if you will turn to that. There were two leaders of this breakout: one is Theaenetus, the son of Tolmidas, a soothsayer, and the other is a general. Now it is remarkable that a soothsayer comes in on an important (at least for the people concerned) and successful military enterprise. Now therefore let us read the immediate sequel. Do you have that?

Reader:
But half of them afterwards, by one means or other, for the greatness of the danger shrunk from it again; but two hundred and twenty or thereabouts voluntarily persisted to go out in this manner. They made them ladders fit for the height of the enemy's wall; the wall they measured by the lays of bricks on the part toward the town where it was not plastered over; and divers men at once numbered the lays of bricks, whereof, though some missed, yet the greatest part took the reckoning just, especially numbering them so often and

[v] Thucydides 3.14.

at no great distance but where they might easily see the part to which their ladders were to be applied, and so by guess of the thickness of one brick took the measure of their ladders.[vi]

LS: You see, why did they succeed? Why did that sally succeed?

Student: Preparation and calculation.

LS: Calculation and measuring. In other words, it was not the soothsayer's art which was responsible, but the art of counting and measuring. That is another of the great themes of Thucydides: the progress due to *technē*.

Same Student: And yet he says several paragraphs later that it was only because of the storm that they escaped.

LS: Yes, that was very helpful: *tychē*, chance. Sure. But still, the basic point—

Same Student: But isn't it remarkable that after such a minute description of all the calculation involved in the whole process, the final sentence is: "But yet the greatness of the storm was the principal means of their escape."

LS: Yes, you are quite right. All right, that would raise the question: Was not the soothsayer's art then ultimately more[9] [important]? Now honestly, what could you say to that? Do you think he means that?

Same Student: I doubt it.

LS: I doubt it too. But you see also the explanation of that, that is the point. That is made very clear in various passages in the Platonic dialogues, and in Xenophon too: art is terribly important for sound action, but it is never sufficient. What is meant by this? Take some simple examples. You plant an orchard and do it according to all the rules of art: that doesn't mean that you will ever enjoy it. Or another Xenophontic example: You marry a woman according to the strict rules of the art of marrying women. And, well, there are people who say that—as you know, there are professional marriage counselors these days—and then how do you know? I mean, the marriage counselor cannot swear to you that this will be a happy marriage, so that *tychē* plays a large role. But if there is *tychē*, then we must have an art destined to master *tychē*. *Tychē* is chance. So we need then an art for mastering [chance]. But what is that art?

Student: The soothsayer's art.

LS: Yes, at least to that extent that it can tell you how [things] will go.

Student: On this sequence on the art to master *tychē*, there was an earlier element of *tychē* where the whole thing was almost thrown off when they bumped the tile off and it

[vi] Thucydides 3.20.

fell down, but they were prepared for this chance. However, in spite of all these preparations—another preparation being taking the roundabout path instead of the direct path, and all these are necessary or it would have failed regardless of the storm or anything—but if the storm hadn't been there, in spite of all the preparation and struggle to master chance, they would have failed.

LS: Well, we only have to read the story of the landing in Normandy, a short while ago, to see how it was absolutely touch-and-go. You know? And here you get weather experts who, they say, told Eisenhower something about a low in the Azores, and could tell him almost every—well, which was it, the sixth of June? That was tolerable weather, and also part of the seventh, and then there will be three or four days where it will be impossible. And it was in the main correct, and yet what a trembling, and what a decision of Eisenhower to make at that time. That is always there, and in war of course increased by the fact that there is someone there who tries to withhold from you vital information. You know who that is? The enemy. If the Germans had given all the relevant information about the landing in Normandy, about the conditions there, it would have been so much easier, don't you think?

Student: I would like to ask a question—are you going on?

LS: No, that was only an attempt to answer the previous question.

Same Student: I was afraid I wouldn't get my chance.

LS: All right, you get your *tychē*. That was a pun. Go on.

Same Student: I've forgotten what I was going to say.

LS: In the meantime, we take another question.

Student: It seems to me that the sort of thing that the soothsayer of that time might have been able—[what] might have laid behind his art is some idea of what was going to happen to the weather.

LS: Well, I don't think so. To take an extreme case, how can you—well, you mean from the flight of birds and so on? You don't mean the intestines.

Same Student: Well, we had a gardener who could tell when it was going to rain: his beetles crossed the road. He was always right.

LS: I see, but that is not soothsaying. Do you remember your point?

Previous Student: I was interested in your remark that you needed something to conquer chance, and that would be the soothsayer's art. You seemed to agree with that. But then a little earlier in the conversation you were talking about the science, and today we have all kinds of predictive sciences, of which you mentioned several. The attempt to gauge

political understanding on the ability of one to predict, the whole notion that scientists can do that, no matter how poorly or uncertainly at this point, but nevertheless that the attempt should be made—

LS: Well, that is an infinite question. But there are predictions that are absolutely safe and sound—

Same Student: But when you drop the soothsayer's art, don't you point to something like the predictive sciences?

LS: That is the point here which is very interesting, that the soothsayers and modern science in its fundamental conception have one thing in common: their belief that chance can be intellectually conquered. There is no question about it. Modern science does this by saying that chance is only the provisional expression, at least in the earlier stages, for complicated causality. And that is absolute nonsense, as one can easily show if one takes any case of chance. The famous Aristotelian example: I dig in the garden and I find a treasure: chance. I didn't dig in order to find a treasure but in order to plant potatoes, and it so happened. And now comes the scientist and says: Well, that is of course a very popular expression, but what is the fact is that a number of causal chains crossed. And so I tell the full history: Why did I wish to plant my potatoes? Because I am a poor man and I live cheaply on potatoes, and therefore I planted potatoes. And potatoes came over with Columbus, and I can go on and on. And then I tell the story of the treasure: There was a war fifty years ago, and the enemy soldiers came, and the only safe place was to bury the treasure. And I can also tell how the treasure was originally acquired by these people, and tell the whole story, and the whole chance event doesn't become an atom less of a chance event: the wholly inexplicable crossing of the two chains remains as unexplained as it was before. What you can understand is what Aristotle tries to do, how it is possible that such chance events can be. But you cannot explain[10] the individual chance event [any more] except by saying that it was a chance event. By the way, you can make very safe predictions. For example, you can say that if there will be human beings two billion years from now, there will be males and females. I would hazard my whole reputation on this prediction. In other words, you can state every essential necessity in the form of a prediction. If man is a rational animal, then wherever there will be man there will be rationality. You can do that if you like that, but it doesn't make the thing clearer but only more confused. Then one can only say, practically speaking: Which predictions are possible? It is possible to predict the outcome of an election in this country, I believe, about four weeks before the election. I think Jim Farley could have done this six months before the election.[vii] So there is nothing particularly impressive—I really don't know of any prediction which is made which is enlightening in these matters. I have heard in economics, the most mathematical of the social sciences, that it is not a bit better, but there I have no knowledge whatever.

Now we must go on to chapter 30. This Spartan commander, Alcidas, of whom we have to say a few words, and a man from Elis, Teutiaplus, addresses to him a brief speech in

[vii] James A. Farley (1888-1976), a leading Democratic Party backroom political operative, postmaster general in President Franklin Roosevelt's first two Administrations.

chapter 30. And there is only one point which we should read in the second half of this brief speech in chapter 30. He suggests that they should go on toward Mytilene and save it from the Athenians—that is what Teutiaplus suggests, and Alcidas doesn't want to.[11] [Teutiaplus] makes one point here in the second half of chapter 30. Will you read it?

Reader:
Therefore if we fall upon them suddenly and by night, I think, with the help of those within, if any be left there that will take our part, we may be able to possess ourselves of the city.

LS: Now what does this mean? "If someone benevolent to us," i.e., pro-Spartan, or Peloponnesian, "is left." What does this mean? That is a very interesting implication. Do you get it?

Student: If they haven't already been annihilated.

LS: Yes, sure, if the Athenians hadn't taken the precaution of slitting the throats of all known pro-Spartans. In other words, it is an implicit strong argument for just killing[12] political opponents. As someone has said: "Stone dead has no fellow. Do you know who said that? You must know it. [LS directs his question to an English member of the class.] Strafford.[viii] He said it. Hobbes associates it,[ix] and he meant it as a simple simile, and that is of some importance because that it is exactly what Alcidas, the Spartan commander, has been doing. Wherever he grabs some people who were not one hundred percent on the Spartan side, he just kills them, has them killed. This is the story told in chapter 32. Let us read that.

Reader:
Whereupon putting off from Embatus, he sailed by the shore to Myonnesus of the Teians and there slew most of the prisoners he had taken by the way. After this he put in at Ephesus; and thither came ambassadors to him from the Samians of Anaea and told him that it was but an ill manner of setting the Grecians at liberty to kill such as had not lifted up their hands against him nor were indeed enemies to the Peloponnesians but confederates to the Athenians by constraint, and that, unless he gave over that course, he would make few of the enemies his friends but many now friends to become his enemies. Wherefore upon these words of the ambassadors he set the Chians and some others, all that he had left alive, at liberty. For when men saw their fleet, they never fled from it but came unto them as to Athenians, little imagining that the Athenians being masters of the sea, the Peloponnesians durst have put over to Ionia.[x]

[viii] Thomas Wentworth, First Earl Strafford (1593-1641), leading Royalist politician and administrator, executed by decree of Parliament during the British Civil War.
[ix] The reference to Hobbes is obscure.
[x] Thucydies, 3.32.

LS: I think when one reads this chapter one must say—that is, at least I couldn't help saying—Thucydides says here, "*Ecce Sparta*." That is Sparta. The thoughtless idiot. I mean, he was not a man of ill will. As soon as someone told him how idiotic his action was, he changed it, but he didn't have the wit to see that by himself. I think there is never such a stupidity by an Athenian—the thoughtless cruelty of the Spartans. And by the way, the general who is here shown is to be distinguished by his lack of imagination and lack of daring. That is in a way the strongest indictment of Sparta which we could find and a worthy prelude to the story of Mytilene which comes later. On the other hand, we get a nice picture of an Athenian nastiness,[13] the action of Paches, in the second half of chapter 34, which we will read.

Reader:
He, when he had called out Hippias, captain of the Arcadians that were within the said wall, with promise, if they should not agree, to set him safe and sound within the wall again, and Hippias was thereupon come to him, committed him to custody, but without bonds, and withal, assaulting the wall on a sudden when they expected not, took it—

LS: In other words, they are waiting now inside for the result of the negotiations, and he exploits this beautiful occasion for rushing the city and gaining it.

Reader:
and slew as many of the Arcadians and barbarians as were within; and when he had done, brought Hippias in again, according as he had promised—

LS: You see, as he had promised. He is an honest man.

Reader:
but, after he had him there, laid hold on him and caused him to be shot to death.[xi]

LS: Is that not beautiful? That is also an Athenian, so you see they are very far from being angels. And there are incidents of this kind which we cannot speak of. We come now to the Mytilenaean story. The Athenians make the cruel decision, called [a] cruel decision by Thucydides himself in chapter 36, that they would kill all [the] Mytilenaeans, and not only the guilty ones. But somehow the Athenians are not quite satisfied and open the debate again; and Cleon is the first speaker and he is in favor of the most violent proceedings. Here again you find the judgment of Thucydides: he was the "most violent of the citizens."[xii] So here we have a clear judgment of this. Now by the way, what could you say to this point? Later on, when he speaks of the equally brutal proceedings of the Spartans, [there is] no value judgment on the part of Thucydides. But here in the case of the Athenians, Cleon in particular, there are value judgments. I believe Mr Morrison has the answer to this question.

[xi] Thucydides 3.34.
[xii] See Thucydides 3.36.

Mr. Morrison: I had my theory about it.

LS: And what is it?

Mr. Morrison: I'd be inclined to say that he doesn't think it worthy of comment that the Spartans behaved in this way.

LS: Very good. I fully agree. In other words, you wouldn't expect anything [else]. In Sparta, they are nice among themselves, tolerably nice, but in war—nothing. I think that is the point.

Now Cleon's speech in chapters 37 to 40. I will mention only a few points. Cleon stimulates the Athenians to action in the same way in which the Corinthians in book 1 try to stimulate the Spartans to action. You know, "You are too easygoing, too trusting," is what the Corinthians said. Here Cleon of course has to express himself differently: You behave like a democracy, [with] the typical weakness and oscillation of a democracy, and how can you at the same time be an imperial city if you continue these easygoing ways? The argument of Cleon reminds at many points of the Spartan argument of the nice man Archidamus.[14] One can say Cleon is trying to transform Athens into a Sparta, but with this great difference: that the sanctity of the laws in Sparta is replaced by the sanctity of the decrees of the popular assembly.[15] This is quite striking. Let us read the last half of chapter 37 and you will see that.

Reader:
But the worst mischief of all is this, that nothing we decree shall stand firm and that we will not know that a city with the worse laws, if immoveable, is better than one with good laws when they be not binding, and that a plain wit accompanied with modesty is more profitable to the state than dexterity with arrogance—

LS: Literally, "ignorance together with moderation." Now moderation is this word which has so many meanings, and [it] has here rather the meaning of law-abidingness, you know, and submission to the laws. These are practically the same words used by King Archidamus in chapter 84 of the first book.

Reader:
and that the more ignorant sort of men do, for the most part, better regulate a commonwealth than they that are wiser. For these love to appear wiser than the laws and in all public debatings to carry the victory as the worthiest things wherein to show their wisdom, from whence most commonly proceeds the ruin of the states they live in.[xiii]

LS: Literally, "the cities." In other words, a certain notion of the sanctity of the city and its laws over against the intelligence of the individual, or you could almost say the conscience of the individual. The Spartan theme is very paradoxically taken up by Cleon

[xiii] Thucydides 3.37.

in Athens. He is as "unintellectual" as the Spartans try to be. The theme is—but here is a very practical lesson: Be docile. You know, just as the Spartans were docile. Be docile. And this means of course in this particular case: Be docile to me. Don't criticize. This is the message he tries to convey. Democracy must have respect of its laws and of its leaders, which is in a way what Pericles says it does; but it is different in Cleon's case because the case is different.[16] The beginning of[17] chapter 38 reminds me of Pericles's last speech: "I am the same in my opinion," just as Pericles says, "I do not change." "You have changed. Yesterday you were in favor of these harsh measures, and now you repent."[xiv]

In the next chapter he speaks of the injustice of the Mytilenaeans. One should translate it "injustice," but only make clear what injustice means here. Injustice means here the breach of contract, the breach of the treaty. The injustice of the Mytilenaeans is an established fact. The only possible counterargument would be that injustice is to our advantage—you know, then one could say: All right, if they committed a crime which was to our advantage, we will take advantage of[18] [it]. And that is of course absurd. And[19] to try to argue this way, that it was a crime but to our advantage, that would be a fantastic rhetorical feat, fireworks. "And here lies the danger with you, for you are enamored more of rhetorical feats than of the well-being of the city." You know, anti-intellectual, anti-egghead. Sophists are mentioned here. The only mention of sophists in the whole work of Thucydides is in this speech by Cleon.

Then he speaks in the next chapter of the particularly great criminality of the Mytilenaeans. They are characterized by *hubris*, by insolent pride: We were too nice to them, and therefore they rebelled. That is the[20] [message]. They must be punished, all of them. There is a very little thing which doesn't come out in Hobbes's translation at the end of chapter 39. Will you read the last eight lines of chapter 39?

Reader:
Besides, that against every city we must be at a new hazard, both of our persons and fortunes. Wherein with the best success we recover but an exhausted city and lose that wherein our strength lieth, the revenue of it; but miscarrying, we add these enemies to our former and must spend that time in warring against our own confederates, which we needed to employ against the enemies we have already.[xv]

LS: You know, when he speaks of the revenue that *you* will be deprived of, that doesn't come out in the translation, but is very neat. He had spoken always of "we," meaning the whole *polis*, but when he speaks of the revenue, he says "you," reminding everyone of his pocket. You know? This is only a little touch which I thought was quite nice. He goes on. There is no reason for forgiveness, for only the involuntary is the object of forgiveness,

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[xiv] In Hobbes's translation, the passage of Cleon's speech to which Strauss refers reads as follows: "For my own part, I am of the opinion I was before; and I wonder at these men that have brought this matter of the Mytilenaeans in question again and thereby caused delay, which is the advantage only of them that do the injury" (Thucydides 3.38).
[xv] Thucydides 3.39.

and clearly this was not an involuntary act. They went voluntarily to Olympia to solicit [. . .][xvi] the Spartan alliance. The three worst things for an imperial city are compassion, pleasure derived from listening to speeches, and gentility or decency. These are things which must be out. In other words, the radical brutalization of Athens is the condition of her survival. And the main point: what is just and what is advantageous absolutely coincide in the present case. The just thing is that criminals are punished, and big criminals, the people guilty of the greatest crimes, must suffer the most severe punishment. That is just, but it is at the same time advantageous because it will be a warning to the others. This is the substance of Cleon's speech.

And now in the next seven chapters there follows the speech of Diodotus. Now whereas Cleon is very well known from other sources, especially the Aristophanic comedies but also other sources, Diodotus is not known at all. Again, this is something that one could not decently say in print, but which I will however say in class: I would not be completely surprised if they were to discover at some time something like an Athenian telephone directory, or whatever it may be, and the name Diodotus simply would not be in it. But one cannot know that. You know I didn't mean that too literally, because as you know the telephone directory was—the telephone was discovered much later.

This is an immensely difficult speech, I must say the most difficult speech I have read hitherto in my present reading, but I will try to begin with it. He begins with a long exposition, practically containing the first two chapters, to this effect: It is harmful for a city if the motives of public speakers are rendered suspect. Oh, I forgot that Cleon threw an aspersion on the motives of his opponents, saying that they are probably bribed by the Mytilenaeans. So Diodotus answers that it is harmful for a city if the motives of public speakers are rendered suspect: There ought to be no reward, honor, for the wise speaker, nor punishment, disgrace, for the foolish one, lest public speakers become concerned with popular acclaim rather than giving the best advice. But strange as it may sound, in this very context Diodotus throws suspicion on Cleon's motives, although he said: Never throw suspicion on a public speaker. Now it is a very absurd beginning. He demands perfect fairness, a thing which we would never get from Cleon, perfectly equal treatment of the decent and indecent speakers, which is to be assured that no one's decency is ever to be questioned, or no one's indecency ever to be brought up. What a strange thing. What can this possibly mean, especially since it appears when you read that the inevitable consequence of the defeat of a proposal in the assembly is the opinion that the proposal was stupid? How strange.

A commentator says, very sensibly, although I believe that he does not go far enough, [that] Diodotus comes close to questioning the value of free debate.[xvii] Obviously, if you cannot show up your adversary, not only that his proposal is not wise, but also it becomes necessary sometimes to make clear the possible motivation. Then if you have to treat everyone as a nice competent man, is it possible? Is this not the end of all freedom of

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[xvi] The transcript has a blank space here.

[xvii] Strauss refers to A. W. Gomme et al., *An Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1945-81), *ad. loc.*

debate? Is it not so? How strange. Let us pursue that. Perhaps we will read chapter 43; it is too long to read the whole.

Reader:
But we do here the contrary; and besides, if any man be suspected of corruption, though he give the best counsel that can be given, yet through envy for this uncertain opinion of his gain, we lose a certain benefit to the commonwealth. And our custom is to hold good counsel given suddenly no less suspect than bad, by which means as he that gives the most dangerous counsel must get the same received by fraud, so also that he gives the most sound advice is forced by lying to get himself believed. So that the commonwealth is it alone which, by reason of these suspicious imaginations, no man can possibly benefit by the plain and open way without artifice. For if any man shall do a manifest good unto the commonwealth, he shall presently be suspected of some secret gain unto himself in particular.

LS: Is this not strange? But let us go on.

Reader:
We, therefore, that in the most important affairs and amidst these jealousies do give our advice have need to foresee further than you that look not far, and the rather because we stand accountable for our counsel, and you are to render no account of your hearing it.[xviii]

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. Let us try to understand that. The *polis* treats in its vote the wise and the fools alike. This is the root of the trouble. This leads to the consequence that sincerity is impossible: both the honest (the good) and the bad counselors must lie. I will first begin with a very superficial survey and then try to interpret that. The main point which he makes in the sequel is this: I am not interested in justice. I am only interested in the question of expediency, what is of advantage to the city. He drops entirely the question of guilt, naturally, because guilt is an aggravating issue. You know, once you drop that you can begin to talk in a businesslike manner. And then he gives in chapter 45 this argument: that capital punishment doesn't stop crime. In the city, murders are constantly committed, although it is a capital crime; and therefore[21] if you make it a capital crime to desert Athens, that will not stop desertion. What do you say to this argument? He goes on to develop this in the following way. Originally there was no capital punishment. In the olden times, the very olden times, there was no capital punishment to speak of, and then people introduced capital punishment here and there and it didn't help, so they introduced new cases for capital punishment so that the extent of application of capital punishment increased up to its present height. That is roughly the argument: Capital punishment doesn't stop crime, so it is impractical; therefore, let us not punish the Mytilenaeans capitally. What do we say to this argument? Because it has come back to us, you know, in our age, especially in your country [LS addresses a student from England]. What do you think of this argument in this context?

[xviii] Thucydides 3.43.

Student: Well, for the same reason that no one goes to war except[22] [when] he thinks he is going to win, no one is ever going to rebel unless he thinks that his rebellion is going to be successful.

LS: Yes, but put it together also with private crime.

Same Student: In private crime, no one commits a crime unless he is fairly certain that he is going to get away with it.

LS: Yes, but still, what would be the consequence of that if you follow his logic, abolish capital punishment? And that we can safely say, if Diodotus had said, "Let us abolish capital punishment altogether on this occasion, not only in the case of the Mytilenaeans, but also against homegrown murderers," and so on and so on, what would have been the reaction? I think they would have said that he was a complete idiot. Is that not so? He's hopeless. It is really amazing. It's amazing. In addition, there is also a slight difference, because a murder can really be committed by an unknown individual; a desertion by a city cannot be committed by an unknown city. What does he want? What does he expect from the use of this argument?

Student: Isn't it important for the Athenians to encourage defection? Isn't it important for the Athenians to always depend on some faction in a city to encourage surrender?

LS: Why should they do that? Early surrender—

Same Student: Supposing [. . .] Suppose the Spartans have one of our allies under siege—

LS: Oh, you mean this, that Athens should not punish the *demos* of Mytilene because Athens should always play the pro-democratic power. Yes, but that is not the argument we[23] [hear] now. It is a sensible argument, but this basic argument is so absolutely strange. What do you make of that? And I said, this is connected with a very strange quasi-historical remark in this very chapter, that the progress of mankind, if I may say so, means the progress in capital punishment, an enlargement of capital punishment. "The olden times were gentle; at the height of civilization, the peak of civilization, people are much more bloody," which runs counter to the whole message of the Archaeology and of the first three chapters of the work. What do you make of that?

Student: Isn't one argument against capital punishment that crimes should be prevented before they occur? I think he kind of infers this by saying that if we would be a little bit nicer to the colonies—well, men have these passions . . . they might be mitigated slightly . . .

LS: Yes. No, the point which he makes is really amazing because he links it up. If he would say it is an unsound policy to apply capital punishment to the whole population of a subject city, and do it rather in the Roman way—every tenth man, or something of this kind, you know—that would make some practical sense. But that he applies it also to

capital punishment within the cities, the overall argument, although he surely doesn't dream of anyone drawing this inference, that makes it so wholly unintelligible. Does any one of you have any idea?

Student: The question, to state it in general terms to get some idea: capital punishment has been instigated over a period of time, and I would describe this in terms of strict rationalization. They wanted something and they couldn't get it, and they tried to—

LS: Yes, I know, they applied the same inappropriate means more and more.

Same Student: Is this a rational statement?

LS: Not rational; I mean, irrational in the sense that they used the wrong means more and more and of course never got what they wanted. But as I say, the practical conclusion would be the abolition of capital punishment also within the city, and that surely, however wise in itself, would have condemned Diodotus in Athens at that time as a complete dreamer, [a] visionary. And why does he endanger the reasonable thing, the reasonable thing being the salvation of the Mytilenaeans? Why does he link it up with such a strange argument?

Student: Because in order to obtain that reasonable thing, he must defeat Cleon's fundamental premise.

LS: And that is what?

Same Student: Cleon's argument is that policy demands capital punishment. The most striking way of destroying that premise would be to show that in the broadest respect[24] capital punishment is insufficient to obtain the end of that policy.

LS: Now I believe that is an important point. Let me try to make it clear to myself. There are two considerations, justice and expediency, and Cleon has said in this case they lead to the same result. Now[25] [Diodotus] says: I disregard justice, I am not interested in that. And then he says, from the point of view of mere expediency, capital punishment is an idiotic measure, which we can say perhaps includes the admission that on other grounds it might be right—I mean, on the grounds of pure justice. That is perhaps the key to the argument. And he says on the ground of mere expediency capital punishment is indefensible, and therefore it is indefensible within the city, and it is indefensible still more in intercity relations.

Student: In other words, it is a rhetorical point that he makes, to defeat Cleon's assertion.

LS: Yes, surely, and I have no doubt that Diodotus is influenced by considerations of humanity as distinguished from mere considerations of Athenian advantage. There is no question. But that, I think, is linked up with this strange speech in the very beginning of the speech, the first two chapters, where he makes these extraordinary remarks which would lead to the consequence that there would be no freedom of debates, of debate.

Because you cannot even question the wisdom of your opponent, because that also destroys his reputation of course, if you show him up as a fool . . .

I will tell you a story which someone has told me once at another university. When they discussed in that department the greatest of all questions, which are of course questions of appointment, and then there were proposals, and people said with great emphasis, "this is an extremely able man, brilliant," and so on and so on. And this friend of mine didn't know very much about these matters because he didn't read all the literature, but he knew one thing: that the judgments of his colleagues were of no value whatever. That he knew. Now what could he do? I mean, he couldn't possibly read the stuff written by those geniuses and all, and perhaps they were not available either; and on the other hand he was sure that it was a mistake to [trust] the judgment of these people lacking judgment. So he did once something apparently wholly irrational. He just expressed [out] loud, he was thinking [out] loud along these lines: Look, if we get this man here whom you recommend so highly, we can no longer[26] raise the question whether he has judgment, because once a man is a member of our group he is presumed to possess judgment. And of course he left it to someone else, maybe, to draw the inference, but he was not very hopeful. In a way, it was irrational because it[27] [led] nowhere, but still it was a forlorn hope that someone might understand it. I think something of this kind is what Diodotus says. He says in a way quite frankly: You lack judgment. You lack judgment, and hence one must deceive you. It is an extraordinary statement. I am sure that this needs a much more careful analysis than I can give now, but that is a very important point.

To show you in advance why I insist so much on this speech, I have the feeling that this is the only speech in the whole work in which this deeper stratum of Thucydidean thought comes to the open: the questioning of the competence of the *polis* as *polis*. How is it possible to get wise action if the sovereignty is vested in a body which by definition is not wise? I don't say that it is by definition unwise, but it is not of the essence—the popular assembly doesn't derive its authority from the presumption that it is wise. So by definition, it is not wise. It may happen to be wise, but it is not essentially wise. How can there be wisdom, how can there be wise decisions under these conditions? We have one case where it was relatively simple: in the case of Pericles, who was so highly esteemed, who had [such] an ascendancy that people did what he said. But this is an unusual case. But that is a matter of chance that such a thing exists, ordinarily it does not exist. Ordinarily Cleon has just as much chance as Diodotus. What can[28] [Diodotus] do? He cannot get wise decisions on wise grounds. He can get them therefore only on nonwise or unwise grounds, and I think that is what he is doing here. I mean, that they were legally unjust, there was no question about the Mytilenaeans. So he drops that as soon as possible. It can only be discussed on grounds of expediency. The [grounds of] expediency[29] are truly ambiguous, as we have seen from the beautiful example of—you know, sometimes killing solves the problem practically, there is no question about it. The true ground of Diodotus I'm sure is his gentleness, his mildness. But if he would speak of mildness, of compassion, then Cleon had already preempted that: these are not feelings which are permitted in an imperial city. That is the road to ruin. So he must therefore argue entirely on the [ground of] expediency,[30] and that is a very poor ground and it shows in the poor character of his argument. I believe that is what is happening here.

There is something else which has to be considered, and that is the strange re-evaluation of ancient times. Capital punishment increases with the progress of civilization, he says. By the way, there is something true to that. You know what happened in the old Germanic tribes? What you had to do in the case of murder was to pay the *Wergeld*, the monetary compensation for the life of the murdered man. That the punishment of murder was taken over by the political authority is not a thing which existed at the beginning—but still, it is surely an exaggeration. The problem, it seems to me, which comes up here for the first time (and as far as I can see for the only time) in the book is this, which we know well from Aristotle. The point of view which Thucydides expresses throughout, especially in the Archaeology but also elsewhere, [is] the notion of progress, the progress of art, the progress of the arts. A progress—and that is understood by a more simple doctrine—[that is] also a progress in gentleness. I advise you to read the speech of Protagoras in Plato's [*Protagoras*],[xix] where Protagoras says to Socrates: Well, you are a baby in the woods. You look down on our contemporary technical civilization? You should see some real savages; then you would be glad to live in the city of Athens with its beautiful law courts and police. Socrates was not so sure that the progress of the arts is a progress in humanity, a progress in mildness, as Thucydides probably would call it. This stratum, it seems to me, this critique of the belief in the arts as sufficient comes out here for the first and I believe only time. I am myself very far from satisfied with what I have said about this. By the way, another parallel [to] the Diodotus speech occurs to me, and that is Plato's *Apology* of Socrates. When Socrates describes there—he has to defend himself against the accusation, you know, of impiety, and then he makes a distinction between the present accusers, three individuals, and the first accuser, a large group of people who cannot be named because there are so many and who are responsible ultimately for the present accusation.[xx] And if you think about it, you see the old accusers are the *polis* of Athens, the *demos* of Athens. So speaking to his judges, to the *demos* of Athens, he says, in a way which they don't see through immediately: You are the ones who are responsible for the whole thing. You know, just as Diodotus speaks to the Athenians as if they could be wise men, knowing that they could not be that. There will be later on in this book a strange quotation from Homer, the last quotation from Homer—in a way, the only thing quoted from Homer in the whole book which I believe has a certain connection with this, as we shall see later.[xxi] But as I say, I am by no means satisfied about what I said about this very difficult passage, and I would like to hear whether there is any one here who can help clarify it, if only by[31] raising objections to what I have said.

Student: I would like to submit some sort of supplementary evidence for this. If you look ahead to the Nicias and Alcibiades speeches, it is possible in the light of what you have said to see Nicias there: what he can't do is what Diodotus can do, which is argue a good policy on specious grounds. He simply gives the good argument on its own grounds, and of course he has no chance at all. And it is rubbed in by the fact that in his second speech, when he tries,[32] he is so clumsy that it has exactly the opposite effect from what he

[xix] Strauss says "the *Republic*" but clearly means the *Protagoras*. See *Protagoras* 320c-328d.
[xx] *Apology of Socrates* 18a-19a.
[xxi] Thucydides 3.104.

intended it to have. And if you tie that back into Pericles again, he said that the person who knows what should be done is of no use to his city unless he can put it across.

LS: Yes, that is true. Only I believe that in Diodotus something comes out which does not come out in Pericles. That I believe is the case. Let me put it this way. Looking backward to the Periclean speech and also forward to the others, I wonder whether Diodotus's speech is not the only one which is in fact, if not explicitly, a plea for mildness, for compassion. I believe an element of what I believe to discern in the funeral speech[33] [as] a certain hollowness is the absence of compassion. I mean, when he speaks of the fallen soldiers, and of course to the old parents and so on—well, that is all very correct and so, but[34] [these are] not the remarks of a compassionate man. And then Diodotus probably would not even have begun to speak if he had not sensed and known[35] [of] a certain dislike in a large part of the Athenian *demos* of these savage proceedings. But somehow a speech was necessary; otherwise, no reversal of the decision. It is, as it were, much less important what was said than that something was said. I mean, in other words, here you make a case, however poor, for mild proceedings so that people have something to base their vote on. But, I repeat again, it could be very poor, the explicit case. Now that is a point which I have not yet clarified in my own mind. I think that this poor case, the poor case which in itself would simply demand the abolition of capital punishment, reflects nevertheless the serious point of Diodotus or of Thucydides himself,[36] which perhaps one can state as follows: that while gentleness does not presuppose wisdom—the simple Athenians who saved Mytilene were not wise men—the other way around[37] is necessary. Wisdom necessarily issues in gentleness, and that I always sense in Thucydides, not in spite [of] but because of the austerely military and diplomatic character of the story he tells. And if this can be used as a proof, which I doubt very much, when you look at the sculptures of the great men of Athens of the fifth and fourth century, what strikes me at any rate most in the sculpture of Thucydides is the gentleness of the expression, much more than in the case of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to say nothing of the poets. That I believe is so, but this is hard to—

Student: That would explain why his speech takes the form of establishing wisdom by counsel, as opposed to Cleon's. As I remember, Cleon's final appeal was to the voice of the people—

LS: Yes, but to the voice of the people as obeying him. Or rather this way: You are bound by the law, i.e., by the decision you made yesterday, and I find there is no legal question whatever of a reversal of this. I mean, that was legally possible, otherwise the whole argument wouldn't make sense.

Same Student: At least Cleon thought he had to inveigh against speeches, and throughout Diodotus restores words as—

LS: Yes, and especially in that very powerful last sentence to this effect in chapter 48: "He who deliberates is stronger toward the enemy than he who attacks them *blindly*," you

can say, "*with the strength of deeds*."[xxii] No, he doesn't use the word speech, but he implies it in "deliberating well." That is not possible except through speech. Yes, I think we have to take up this issue of Diodotus's speech more because of the unsatisfactory character of what I said. Now then there follows a discussion of the Plataean [affair] and that discussion we will postpone until next time.

Student: Could I raise a small point? Again, this is not a thing . . . My general interest in Nicias in this makes it very interesting to me that he makes his first appearance here in a little paragraph which has no apparent importance at all, which is sort of sandwiched in between the affairs of Mytilene and Plataea. You've shown what an ugly war it is—

LS: In which chapter is that?

Same Student: It is in chapter 51. I mean, I wouldn't want to make too much of it, but what are the reasons for putting in this? This little episode doesn't tie into anything.

LS: That is perfectly possible. I had not observed that, but it is perfectly possible, and you see that is such a difficult thing in reading Thucydides, that by his commitment, his overcommitment, he is compelled to enumerate all military operations of each summer or winter—particularly summer, of course. And you know he has no freedom to—the freedom which the poet has, who can only select things which are meaningful; Thucydides has to bring in the meaningless and the irrelevant as well, within limits, of course, and that makes it so very hard to see, you know, what is a mere stupid accident and what is meaningful. I have observed in the second half of the *History* that there is surely a clear plan underlying the simple enumeration. Let me put it this way. You have here *n* subsequent things, just as one follows chronologically from the other historical accident. I drew up a list[38]: [there] was too much there, and then I discovered a pattern, you know, but you don't say that there is a pattern.

Student: I was interested in these, too.

LS: That makes very much sense. There is another point which is, I think, generally known: the first mention of Brasidas somewhere in the second book, that this is already a kind of *Leitmotif* which in a way announces—no, that is surely the case. Let me see here, I have a few remarks about this speech. Perhaps I can state it as follows. A genuine superiority of the present to the past—you know, the superiority of the present to the past is affirmed very emphatically by Pericles, and by Thucydides himself in the Archaeology—a genuine superiority of the present to the past would require that the *polis* have an appreciation of wise and gentle people. And I think this is, if I understand it correctly, the message of Diodotus's speech: the unwisdom of the present-day Athenian *demos* in the first two chapters, and savagery, the hardly limited savagery, of the modern Athenian *demos*. That the Athenian *demos* is much less savage than the Spartan *demos*—your point is of course granted. But the thought of Thucydides I think goes deeper. The contemporary Athenians are gentler than the Spartans, and this is shown by the whole

[xxii] The passage in Hobbes's translation reads, "For he that consulteth wisely is a sorer enemy than he that assaulteth with the strength of action unadvisedly."

story of Plataea on the one hand, and Mytilene on the other. I would go a step further—oh yes, that is a point which I forgot to make. When we come to the Plataean discussion, the discussion regarding Plataea in the Peloponnesian camp, we will make this observation: that the only consideration there, the only consideration on both sides [is] justice. Did the Plataeans commit a crime or did they not? The question of expediency doesn't arise. In Athens, even Cleon is compelled to bring up this more rational consideration as to whether it is advantageous. That is, I think, the point. And Diodotus gets the better of Cleon. You know? He says: All right, then let us really look at it rationally. Is it wise for our city? And by the way, the other message which it contains, but which I have not stressed but it is very obvious, is this: that foreign relations cannot be the domain of vindictive justice. You know, the great difficulty on various levels, it is hard to—first of course the absence of a competent judge. This great point—[that] this is not the sphere of—that is of course also mentioned in Thucydides, but I think his thought is broader and deeper. There is a certain inhumanity which can be involved in the notion of "let justice be done regardless." Within a limited framework that may make sense, but not simply. And from this point of view the consideration of advantage is a humanizing consideration. It is not sufficient—surely not, I think—that Diodotus has in mind ultimately that it doesn't become the city of Athens to be such a universal butcher. But as a step toward reasonableness, this argument based on expediency is helpful.

Student: You just mentioned in passing while discussing this particular passage—you mentioned Homer, and then you didn't say anything about it.

LS: [. . .][xxiii] I suggest you read chapter 104, that is the chapter on Homer, and if you would really like to learn something, I would advise you to draw up the plan. I mean, well, what happens distinctly is this. After the Plataean and Mytilenean affairs are closed there is a transition to the Corcyraean sedition—you know, a description of what civil war did to Greece during this era. But after that is through, after chapter 85, a very dull section begins. Up to that point the reader of the third book does not have a dull moment, but then it becomes dull: in the second summer they did this, and then they did this, and then they did this. And then when you go away and make a single enumeration on a piece of paper, a simple and stupid enumeration, ultimately a pattern emerges which reinforces the importance of this chapter with the Homer quotation. There was one verse quoted in the Archaeology, a single verse, but here are thirteen verses quoted [in 3.104], and it is one of these digressions which do not fit into the severity of[39] Thucydides's procedure altogether.

Student: I was very confused by what you said on capital punishment . . .

LS: I beg your pardon, you must speak louder.

Same Student: In chapter 45—you can think of death being applied in many cities for far less crime than this. In sum, this speaker thinks the punishment must fit the crime to be effective.

[xxiii] The transcriber notes: "Very short inaudible comment."

LS: [. . .] But still, if the electric chair threatens them—unless it is done by so many that the physical impossibility—we don't have enough executioners.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: No, no, however many murders may be committed, only a small part of the population commits murder, and the same applies to cities. Let us assume that betrayal and desertion are not capital crimes; then they all might desert Athens. But if an example is made of Mytilene—that is Cleon's calculation—it does hit them, and they know and they won't do it any more. If we are mild, then they are always a serious threat . . .

Same Student: . . . And what you would be doing in the city is providing a very harsh penalty for a lighter crime, a crime even lighter than this, which is a bad thing to do because the lighter crimes are more likely to be committed than the greater crimes, and[40] once[41] people do commit the lighter—I mean, just because a man takes a can out of a food store doesn't mean that he is going to commit further criminal acts, but[42] if the maximum penalty already could be imagined for him in spite of the levity of his action, doesn't he take capital punishment more lightly?

LS: You mean inflation.

Same Student: There is no incentive not to do worse deeds—

LS: I don't know quite what you mean, because if he is caught, that is the end of all such calculation, so that the inflation of capital punishment means that they are not in fact punishable. Only then would the consequence follow. That is not what I believe Diodotus wanted. Perhaps we can take it up some other time.

Session 7: January 24, 1962
Book 3, Chapters 52-115

Leo Strauss: You raised very many important questions, and some of them are simply beyond my competence because I have not seen these points as clearly as you have seen them.[i] Now let me take up a few points. You rightly stressed the fear the Athenian commanders had in the case of a failure, and this is surely a point. No such fear existed in the minds of the Spartan commanders. There is a chapter in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, the first book, I think, where he speaks about this question and of how sensible the Romans were in this matter. You know the famous story of Varro after the battle of Cannae, the greatest defeat that the Romans had ever incurred, and the Roman Senate goes to greet Varro, the defeated commander, thanking him that he had not despaired of the battle.[ii] That was Roman and wise. Machiavelli adds: If you add to the many worries of the commander still the worry of his own safety, how can you expect him to act wisely? And surely Thucydides gives much material in regards to this question.

You also brought out very well the question of a war of alliance, you know, does the ally wish you to win completely? And the Trachinians[iii] were afraid that if the Athenians would win too much they would become too powerful. This is also I think an important chapter in judging fairly of Demosthenes. You saw very well that Demosthenes is regarded by Thucydides very highly. I would say that I think that he is the greatest favorite of Thucydides. There is no one whom I think he liked as much as a person as he did Demosthenes, and that comes already out of this section, and more the next time. You also saw clearly the difference between the two Athenian commanders in Corcyra, Nicostratus and Eurymedon, and I think it is absolutely sound what you said there.[iv] But what you said about the lack of wisdom of Athenian military policy did not entirely convince me. For example, that the Athenians did not take action in order to save Plataea: Could they do it? I mean, is not the premise of the whole argument that in any land battle there in Attica and Boeotia the Athenians would be hopelessly outnumbered by the Spartan–Theban combination? And I believe that they couldn't do anything about it at that time.

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] Marcus Terentius Varro, Roman general and politician, active ca. 218-ca.200 BCE. After commanding the Roman forces at the disastrous battle of Cannae against Hannibal and his Carthaginians (in which 80,000 Romans, including his colleague Lucious Aemilius Paullus, perished) he returned to the city and, rather than being punished for the loss of his army, was met and thanked by "all the orders"for not despairing of the city (Livy, *Histories* 22.61.14). In Machiavelli's account of this matter, however, it is, as Strauss suggests, the Senate which is credited for the decision not to punish Varro (*Discorsi* 1.31).

[iii] Strauss must have meant to say the Acarnanians (3.113.6); the Trachinians were allies of Sparta (3.92).

[iv] On Nicostratus and Eurymedon and their different responses to the civil strife at Cocyra, see Thucydides 3.73.81.

Now what is the overall situation, if we try to make it as simple as we can? The Athenians are rather helpless against their enemies if the navy is not crucial. Now in the immediate neighborhood of Athens, including Boeotia, of course, the navy could not be of any help. Their great strength was of course that Athens could not be taken—by the enemies, I mean. You could almost say that the walls of Athens are as good as the Channel was for Britain. Well, occasionally it is said that Athens is in a way an island, and the island here is created not by a ditch but by a wall. This was the clear point. The politically defensive policy of Athens was of course compatible with strategically offensive moves. The situation reminds a bit of Britain. I can't help thinking of that: in the Second World War, the unassailable British Isles; and then, say, Egypt as a base very far away but from which moves could be made against the soft underbelly. And Naupactus in the west of Greece, a port, fulfilled a function which could be compared with that of Egypt in the Second World War. Or is this entirely misleading? I mean, in Naupactus they could always count on their navy, and Naupactus was also unassailable and from there they could create a few disturbances in central Greece and even in the northern part of the Peloponnesus.

I mean, I do not see as clearly as you did that the Athenians' overall military policy was so inept. In individual measure, surely, but what could the Athenians do except to annoy the Spartans as much by all kinds of half-naval operations as the Spartans annoyed them by the invasions of Attica? And that is proved then in the fourth book, when Demosthenes's biggest success comes in Pylus or Sphacteria, then that suffices for bringing the Spartans down. You know, they had to probe in various places—where they would get local success which would bring the Spartans down, which would make the Spartans willing to make peace on the basis of the pre-war status quo. That was, I think, the Athenian problem. It took some time in which to do it. The Spartans made surely many mistakes—for example, in Mytilene, the slow movements of Alcidas—but on the other hand, one can very well[1] doubt even if Alcidas had been a superior general whether they could have kept Mytilene, given the Athenian navy. But you were not speaking of the mistakes of the Spartans as much as [of] the mistakes of the Athenians. I mean, I do not see such gross blunders. In Plataea one could say that the Athenians should have evacuated these poor fellows much earlier, but that would be a move dictated by humanity,[2] but [whether] it was not helpful to keep the Peloponnesians employed so long in the siege of Plataea is another matter. Now what would you say to these points?

Student: I didn't mean so much the military ineptness in the sense of probing, as you say, or going to the Peloponnesus to bother them; I mean more—

LS: I mean, even probing also with a view to[v]—may have [had] some success, possibly due ultimately to the naval preponderance of Athens, which would make the Spartans willing to end the war. Athens according to Pericles's program had no interest—I mean, he doesn't even plan to defeat Sparta militarily, to bring her down to her knees. The only thing he wanted was to make the Spartans tired of the war and willing to leave the Athenian empire with all the frills as it was prior to the war. The Spartans were under compulsion to bring Athens down, and that they could not do because they could not take

[v] It is possible that something is missing here, though it is not indicated in the transcript.

Athens from the land side, and surely they could not defeat the Athenian navy. I mean, what they did in Attica was ultimately strategically of the same kind as the famous attacks on the western front in the First World War. You know, you run and run and create all kinds of damage, but strategically the situation is not effective, because the Athenians had written off their countryside from the very beginning. It meant great suffering for individuals, but that was included in the original plan. Or am I wrong, and were there really serious Athenian military mistakes? The political mistake was brought out very well by you, and that is that a general should not be in this awkward position that he has to fear to be hanged if he makes a mistake. Demosthenes did make a mistake, granted.

Student: I think when I was talking about Demosthenes I said that the mistakes he made were not strictly on the military level, but what I meant was that in the first battle, after the first battle, he stays in Naupactus. He doesn't go back to Athens; he was afraid what the Athenians would do to him—

LS: Yes, that is a very important question—

Same Student: Then when Eurylochus came in with, I think, three thousand men-at-arms of the Peloponnesian confederates, and [they] were going to take up with the Aetolians, he appeals to the Acarnanians to help him with the war—Demosthenes did. And if they hadn't helped him—Thucydides said that he had much trouble getting them to help him anyway because he didn't go against the Leucadians in the first war, so they were mad at him, and if he hadn't got the Acarnanians to help him and he hadn't been protected in Naupactus, then he probably—

LS: Yes, but he knew that the Acarnanians, however mad they might have been [at] his failure to follow their advice, were sufficiently stirred up. They didn't wish the Spartans to get Naupactus; I mean, you could count on that. I think he was not a fool. I think he was somewhat too trustful, and in addition he lacked knowledge of the terrain—you know, of the territory there—and had to depend too much on local information that was not necessarily trustworthy—Demosthenes.

Same Student: He did make a military mistake, though, in not waiting for the Locrians—

LS: Obeying and trusting the Messenians [. . .] But we were speaking now of the overall military policy of the Athenians.

Student: What about Thucydides's own judgment in the famous paragraph 65 of the second book, where he describes Pericles's recommendations, namely, due to the fact of the probing, and given the navy they should withdraw from the land to the sea; and then he says after that they did contrary to this in law?

LS: Yes, yes, but then you—

Same Student: I say that it isn't clear from the individual incidents that they did contrary to this—

LS: Yes, because minor mistakes were of course committed on both sides. No, but that is a very—as all Thucydidean judgments, you know these judgments which we use as our guideposts, all of them are much much more obscure than they appear at first sight. Now when you read chapter 65, you have first the impression that they simply made blunders, and of course the only thing that appears as the transgression of Pericles's policy is the Sicilian expedition. I mean, that was[3] clearly against Pericles's notion. And then Thucydides goes on to show that the Sicilian expedition could have been successful, i.e., Pericles was unduly cautious. And then he brings out as his formula for what was wrong not that the Athenians became too expansionist for war, but that the successors of Pericles were too much concerned with their private good as distinguished from the public good. Now this is of course a very general formula, and it needs a lot of elaboration.

Now if we apply it to the most important case, the Sicilian expedition, [4]there it refers primarily to the story of Alcibiades, the implication of Thucydides's judgment in 2.65 being that Alcibiades's conception of the Sicilian expedition was militarily sound. But it could work only if in fact Alcibiades had been the commander, and the mistake of the Athenians was to recall Alcibiades. Thucydides does not go into the question here: Was Alcibiades guilty of impiety of which he was accused? But he was sure that Alcibiades was not recalled because of his impiety but because of his political enemies, who used that—his true or alleged crimes—in order to ruin Alcibiades. And now in another way I think we would have to start from this fact[5]—again, what Thucydides says in his explicit judgment on Pericles: Pericles was in fact the monarchical ruler of Athens, but of course not in law. After Pericles the democracy existed both in law and in fact, and democracy is not good for this kind of policy. I think that is the implication, confirmed by his statement in book 8 that Athens had the best constitution in 411, when it was or became a qualified democracy.[vi] And I think this particular point which was brought out by our speaker today is connected with that: the lack of trust and responsibility, of trust in and general responsibility [granted] to the military commanders. The Spartans made all kinds of mistakes, but they did not—the commanders had not to be afraid of being hanged to the lamppost. In another sense, Thucydides's judgments are abbreviations, are extremely laconic and need a very long commentary. One could say that they are as helpful as they are also misleading, if you do not take in the whole. We have to take up this question more fully later.

There was one more point in the speaker's paper which I would like to take up now. You made some remarks about the Plataeans' speech, and if I understood you correctly, you counted everything. That is always helpful. Did you count in Greek or in English?

Student: In English.

[vi] Thucydides 8.97.2.

LS: That is of course no good. I mean, it is provisionally useful but it cannot be taken as evidence. But let us disregard it. The main point is, Hobbes simply doesn't translate literally enough, therefore you can't do that—if I understood you correctly, you said that in this debate, in this discussion about the fate of the Plataeans, the basic premise is that justice means to be a good Greek. Isn't that what you said? I mean, he who betrayed the Greeks is a criminal; he who helps the Greeks is a good man, a just man. But the Spartans,[vii] by helping the Athenians, the enemy of the Greeks, are sinners. Isn't this what you meant?

Same Student: I didn't say that—

LS: But didn't you mean that?

Same Student: Sort of—

LS: But would you disagree?

Same Student: No, no!

LS: I see, in other words, you only—

Same Student: I agree, but I didn't say that.

LS: Oh, I see. All right, then we don't have to argue out—perhaps I am an older hand at such matters and can state it more ruthlessly. You know? That is indeed true; that one can say. And that is connected with a very interesting question in the work as a whole, book 2, chapters 8 to 9, where Thucydides says that the Athenians were universally hated, and the Spartan slogan was: Liberate the Greeks from the tyrant city. Do you remember that? Now that is a very difficult passage, because if that is the formula for the war, well, why does not Thucydides bring it up when he discusses the war cause in book 1? He speaks of all kinds of causes, but not of the fact that it is a war of liberation, in other words, a kind of new Persian War: at that time the Medes were the enemy, and now it is Athens. And Thucydides seems to say this without any qualification, and there is one striking thing, this remark, [6]one of the few explicit remarks in Thucydides, which would be helpful as a beacon for the whole thing, because if this was true and[7] Athens was the villain, then of course imperialism, as we call it conveniently, is wicked in itself because[8] Athens became the tyrant city by virtue of imperialism. And that would fit beautifully in that pro-Sparta scheme which a former speaker and I enjoy so much. You know, the moderate Sparta—moderate both in her domestic and her foreign policy—versus the immoderate Athens, immoderate both domestically and in her foreign policy.

Unfortunately for this beautiful picture, this remark of Thucydides about the war of liberation occurs in the context of the first story of Plataea, namely, of the Thebans' flagrant breach of peace and of the treaty by attacking Plataea in the midst of peace. Remember that? And there is a shocking contrast between this glamorous picture of the

[vii] Strauss says "Spartans" where he must mean "Plataeans."

Spartan cause and the arid, bitter—if one looks up the passage again as I did this morning, [what] one sees, as I might have seen but not sufficiently, is that Thucydides literally says: Well, the Athenians were universally hated, that is clear, adding: Especially since the Spartans proclaimed aloud that they, the Spartans, were liberating Greece. You know, that is the Spartan war slogan. Thucydides doesn't say anything about it. That has infinite consequences. It has the consequence of course also that Thucydides might not agree not only with the Spartan judgment but also with their criticism of imperialism as such, which one would otherwise find. The picture is much more complicated. I cannot go into that now, but only this simple word: Athenian imperialism was not a bit more unjust than Sparta's defensive policy. Sparta was not just in being so relatively peaceful. Sparta had a stone at her leg, if you understand this simple simile, being that the Spartans had done their crooked things centuries ago by subjugating the Messenians. You know? And they had their troubles. They could not engage in wars because they had a powerful subject population: that was the reason for their caution in foreign affairs. It is a problem which you can compare, by the way—I don't remember an exact modern parallel, but a partial parallel is why the Germans', especially the Prussians' policy was in favor[9] [of] good relations with Russia, I mean the old Russia, because there was a Polish question. That was Bismarck's very awkward situation: What could we gain in defeating Russia? Additional Polish territory, additional troubles for Prussia. And for Russia in a way the same problem exists in the other way, because the bordering provinces of Prussia which she could easily conquer or might have conquered would also have been Polish. So that, in other words, Sparta's foreign policy looks much more just than it was.[10] The true difference concerns not the foreign policy but the inner order, which we shall speak of a little bit later.

So I am glad we agree on the Plataean speech. Here, I think, consent or assent is of great value. Now the first thing I have to do is to rectify a defect rather than an error of my disposition last time. Although it will cost you about ten minutes, I will briefly speak about the Diodotus speech. You remember it was so unsatisfying what I said last time. I will speak first about chapter 42 in book 3, and I shall try to do what I did last time with the Mytilenaean speech, namely, developing the implications which are not stated, but which must be developed so that one understands the logic.

He makes the remark there in chapter 42 that the one whose proposal is defeated acquires the reputation of unintelligence. The context is this. That happens anyway, and therefore one must not say that the enemy—I mean, the opponent—is bright,[viii] i.e., dishonest. That can be avoided, this additional thing. What cannot be avoided is that he whose proposal is defeated will acquire the reputation of lack of intelligence. Now what is the implication of that? The popular assembly is assumed to be wise. He who fails to get the vote must be presumed to be unwise. That is the premise. In accordance with this he uses later on in the same chapter the following opposition: the man who advises well is opposed to him who does not get the vote. The man who does not get the vote is the man who advises ill, a necessary consequence if you take the logic of democracy strictly, [i.e.,] that the sovereign people are competent to judge what is wise. But the difficulty here is this. Every member of the *demos* has the right to speak in the assembly, naturally; hence no

[viii] "Bright" is uncertain here; perhaps a transcription error.

speaker must be regarded as unwise, even if his proposals are always defeated. Do you see the necessity? Also, for the same reason, since they are all regarded as equal, no one must be regarded as corrupt, because if anyone is regarded as corrupt, what is true of one is true of all. There must be a presumption of universal wisdom and honesty. And the difficulty is indicated by the fact that Diodotus, in his passionate demand [that] no one's character must be "assassinated," as we would say today, is compelled to assassinate the character of Cleon, to suggest that[11] [he][ix] may very well have been corrupt. Every member of the assembly must be assumed to be competent and honest, for since they are equal, what is true of one is true of all. This equality must not be rendered ineffective by the respect for wisdom, i.e., popularity, or disgrace for folly, i.e., unpopularity. Now by popularity and unpopularity I mean now the vote whether your proposal is accepted or not.

That is the situation in a democracy in strict logic. In chapter 43 [he says] the Athenian practice[12] does not live up to these demands, for two reasons. First: If someone is thought to say the best, yet is suspected of being bribed, we do not accept his sound advice. Two: We inconsiderately reject good things that openly, frankly—here Hobbes's translation is seriously in error; he says "suddenly" instead of "openly." That simply doesn't make sense.[x] Now what does he mean by that? The fiction on which we act in a democracy, that all are counted—you must not forget that this is a direct democracy; in a modern democracy you don't have to say that all citizens are wise and just, but you must make a corresponding assumption regarding the representatives of the people, so you replace the popular assembly by the parliament and then you see at least the modern equivalent of the problem. The fiction on which we act, that all are competent and just, is of course untenable. We know that not all speakers are honest. That not all speakers are wise is less important, for we somehow feel that we, the common people, that we are not the best judges of wisdom. In fact, we suspect all speakers somehow, because in a way it is a special group—the famous question of Sorel,[xi] you know, against the parliamentarians as distinguished from the people themselves. We suspect all politicians. That simple word would help. We assume in all cases that the speaker means something different from what he says. He says that he means the common good, but we believe that he is acting only on his own interest. Again, not such a far-fetched proposition; we learn this everyday in social science, I gather. Thus we compel all speakers to speak dishonestly. That is precisely what it means in chapter 43. We compel all speakers to assert things which they do not believe.

Now it is clear that this conclusion follows directly from the deficient wisdom of the assembly. If the assembly is of deficient wisdom, it cannot accept wise proposals as wise;

[ix] Strauss misspeaks, saying "Diodotus" for "Cleon."

[x] The erroneous passage in Hobbes's translation reads: "And our custom is to hold good counsel given *suddenly* no less suspect than bad, by which means as he that gives the most dangerous counsel must get the same received by fraud, so also he that gives the most sound advice is forced by lying to get himself believed." (Thucydides 3.43.2, emphasis added).

[xi] Georges Sorel (1847-1922), maverick French Marxist thinker and publicist, proponent of syndicalism and revolutionary violence, opposed socialism and all other forms of parliamentarism.

it can only accept wise proposals in the guise of folly, and that means one must lie to them. Yet in fact only a small part of the assembly are speakers in it. The speakers are more intelligent than the nonspeakers, that is, generally speaking. They are compelled to be, for they can be held accountable, whereas the nonspeakers merely vote and cannot be held accountable. It is very simple. Someone makes a proposal for war; the proposal is accepted with enthusiasm. The war goes wrong: Will the sovereign people be accused? Of course not, it is the guy who made the proposal. These are the thoughts which he develops in the first two chapters.

And then he goes into the substantive issue, and I will only give the beginning. I shall disregard the question of justice, whether we justly can butcher the Mytilenaeans. I shall limit myself to the question of our advantage alone. But this all must be understood in the light of the principles he stated in the preceding chapter: I cannot propose a wise proposal on its own terms; I must propose it in a foolish guise, otherwise it would never go through. For he argues that if the Mytilenaeans have committed a crime it does not yet follow that it is wise to punish them capitally. "So Cleon, you are right; they are terrible criminals, but that does not yet prove that it is wise to butcher them." And now he goes on to say, "and if they are excusable"—he doesn't follow that up— "and if they are excusable"—I supply what he suppresses—"I would not suggest clemency, if clemency were not advantageous to the *polis*." But he does not develop this; he only expressly says, "if they are excusable, this might not be profitable for the *polis*." He suppresses the conclusion directly following from which they are excusable. Now in accordance with what he has indicated before, Diodotus does not argue that indiscriminate butchery is unworthy of Athens, because that would not be a thought which would go over, but that capital punishment does not deter men. He does not say that it does not deter *any* men; he says it does not deter men. You see, murder is a capital crime, and [yet] how many murders are committed? Capital punishment does not deter men from committing crimes; given sufficient motive and opportunity men are practically compelled to commit crimes. Nature is stronger than law; *physis* is stronger than *nomos*. And now that was the reason for my disaster last time: I didn't see it as Diodotus saw it. I saw it from a wrong perspective.

Now comes the key[13] event, the passage's conclusion: but crimes which you are compelled to commit are involuntary, and the involuntary crimes deserve clemency, as Cleon had stated. This sentence here now is stated in chapter 41; that he suppresses. And he states a premise and he does not draw the conclusion, but somehow as a wise speaker he knows that sometimes people do draw the conclusion which is not stated. That is the reason why he makes this otherwise so farfetched reasoning about capital punishment in general. Capital punishment does not help; it is a delusion [to think] that it can help, and indeed an indestructible delusion. Therefore there has taken place a constant increase in the use of capital punishment. People see all the time that it is no good, but then they heap capital punishment on capital punishment. And the implication of this, as he makes clear: in the olden times there were only soft punishments, and the progress of civilization consists in a progress in harsh punishments. We can also state it differently: originally there was only nature, no law; *nomos* comes afterwards and grows and grows and grows. The implication: the remote past was more gentle than the present. There was

of course much support for this view; the Greeks talked about the age of Cronos prior to Zeus, which was that.

Now remember the beginning of the work: We, the Athenians, are not at the peak in every respect; in such a very important respect we are rather low; the men in the beginning were superior. And now I link it up with the argument in chapters 42 and 43: We are not at the peak, for the fundamental difference between the wise and unwise subsists as it has always been. The notion of progress—I telescope the thing—the notion of progress as developed in the Archaeology and in Pericles's funeral speech implies a progress all around. You know, when Pericles speaks of Athenian individuals, you know there are no good-for-nothings in Athens, there are no fools in Athens—remember, they were marvelous fellows. That is now corrected explicitly only in Diodotus's speech. So Diodotus is in a way the man closest to Thucydides's own speech.

Then later on, I cannot go into that, in chapter 46 or so, he says frankly, after having laid the foundation—you must never forget the situation, when Diodotus begins to speak he knows that roughly fifty percent of the population doesn't like the butcher[y]. But that is not enough that they don't like it; there must be a formal vote, and you cannot have a formal vote if you do not have a formal proposal and a formal speech. The quality of the speech, if I may so, is not as important as the fact that the speech is made. The arguments used in this speech are not as important as the conclusion which is supported, the conclusion being, Don't butcher the Mytilenaeans. On what grounds is not important. He uses the toughest ground—it is not clever, it is not Machiavellian, you know, Machiavellian enough. Cleon is an emotional sentimentalist. I talk tough, naturally I exaggerate it. In chapter 46 he says explicitly one cannot blame a free city like Mytilene if it revolts. He says it explicitly. In other words, he denies of course that[14] Athens has a moral right to punish Mytilene. That is clear, but that comes up only later. So this only in correction of what we discussed last time.

Student: In the beginning of your discussion of his speech, you point out that Athens was a democracy in which every man had the right to speak. Now there are some students of fifth century Athens who have said that there was sort of an unwritten law that only men of prominent families were speakers in the assemblies.

LS: There was no law—

Same Student: It was an unwritten custom.

LS: Yes, but Cleon didn't come from a noble family anyway—

Same Student: Isn't it possible that Cleon was sort of a demagogue who, let's say, changed this tradition . . .

LS: Yes, that is hard to say, but you must never forget there is one point—I mean, Thucydides may entirely mislead us regarding Athens, I don't know, but when we are concerned with understanding Thucydides's thought we must listen to what he says. You

know? Take the extreme view, that Thucydides made an entirely imaginative picture, imaginary picture of what happened. It would be possible, but surely the fact of Cleon's position shows that at least after Pericles—not accepting people from the gutter, because Cleon was a man of the middle class but he did not belong to the old families. I mean, there is no question about that. And that he was not an exception, that this spread in at least this generation is perfectly clear from what we know partly from Thucydides and partly from Aristophanes. Surely, as Pericles put it in his speech, we don't have to go out [to find it elsewhere]; Pericles says that equality [is] mitigated by esteem, by reverence. That is all we mean.

Same Student: I'm not suggesting that only the wise men, only the gentlemen could speak in the assembly after Pericles, but I was suggesting that only a limited number of men who customarily spoke in the assembly—and let's say that with Cleon they became very unwise and very immoderate men—were able to speak, but only a limited number—

LS: Yes, but the question is—well, but that was really practice and not law. But the question with which Diodotus is concerned primarily is not the speakers but the members of the assembly as a whole who vote, after all, and they were surely—I mean, there was universal suffrage, there was no property qualification of any kind. There were very strict qualifications regarding citizenship; I mean, you had to be the son of a citizen father and a citizen mother, and sometimes perhaps a few generations. There were certain changes in this respect, [but] it was not easy to become an Athenian citizen. But among the born citizens, no qualifications. Even [for] some there were, but I think they applied only to office, to election to office: you had to prove that you had not deserted, never been a deserter. What were the three things? That you had taken care of the graves of your parents and ancestors, and that you had paid your taxes. I mean, that was the preliminary (how did they call it?) qualification that was required . . . There was no property qualification. But the main point is that Cleon doesn't speak of the speakers—Diodotus, I mean—and Cleon, too, speaks of the multitude. He says that you cannot combine democracy with empire because you are too volatile, you change your mind so often. You cannot have a consistent far-reaching policy in a democracy. That was Cleon's observation. But in Cleon's case, of course [this is] only an attempt to get[15] agreement to the proceedings of the day before.

Student: Would you restate the last portion about progress and capital punishment? I am very confused over it.

LS: He goes over a variety of subjects—

Same Student: The relation all the way around so the point hits home.

LS: Well, all right, then, let us try to make it clear. [. . .] Now what were the items: progress, nature—or nature and punishment, capital punishment—

Same Student: And then the last point that you made on the speeches, the fact that the ends of the speech [. . .]

LS: Well, now let me [. . .][xii] First of all, what does progress mean? By the way, we may use the word progress without hesitation because it is a term occurring in the classical writers. I don't believe it occurs in Thucydides; I don't know, but it is used by Aristotle and Plato [. . .].[xiii] But surely the substance is there in Thucydides, and it means primarily a progress of the arts, in the arts—progress in intelligence, as one could loosely say. The weakness of the ancients of which Thucydides speaks is a weakness not only in power but a weakness in understanding. Homer did not understand that Agamemnon made this campaign against Troy not because there was an oath of the wooers of Helen, but because Agamemnon was the strongest naval potentate of the time. You know, this kind of thing. We know; we are no longer under the spell of these fables, this is clear.

Now there was a school—Aristotle's *Politics*, book 2—of Hippodamus, which said what is good for the other arts is also good for the political art, the legislative art, and therefore there can be a progress in politics, in human living together as well as in the arts proper; we know that.[xiv] And in a way Thucydides seems to suggest the same thing: Pericles surely means that in his funeral speech. Now what does such a progress mean, a progress in human beings? And I would say primarily one would think it would be a progress in gentleness: men are no longer savages. If you think this is an invention of mine, read Plato's *Protagoras*. I think I referred to that last time, the speech of Protagoras, where Protagoras says to Socrates: You should live among these savages, which were brought on the stage last year by a comic poet, then you would see how wonderful is the nice life in Athens, how wonderful these nice Athenians are.[xv] So is this point clear? Progress is simultaneously a progress in intelligence and in gentleness, a thought [with] which we are thoroughly familiar because since three centuries it has been dinned into our ears, and the process is still going on.

Now we are much more intelligent, we are much more intelligent today—the famous story [that] every ten-year-old boy can do the mathematical problems which required the genius of Archimedes and Galileo and Fermi . . . So we are more intelligent; you have heard that. Now what Diodotus says in the first place is that we are not so intelligent: why, there are as many fools around now as there were in the past! The implication is that there may have also been some wise men around in the past. We will come to that later. The other point is this. We are so gentle—well, we could say that we don't use[16] torture anymore; [but] they did use[17] torture, at least against slaves. And we don't walk around anymore armed—which would of course be a bad example [to use] in Chicago, but in Athens [it] worked; you know, when Thucydides says: Look, they walked around heavily armed, and now we go about with[out] guns. Well, some of us do, but we are unwise.

[xii] The transcript has a blank space here.

[xiii] The transcript has a blank space here. It is unclear to what term Strauss might have referred here as equivalent to the English progress; the passage of the *Politics* to which he is about to refer contains none. There Aristotle presents the alteration of laws (*kinesis,* the primary sense of which is "motion"*)* as sometimes for the better and sometimes not, but uses neither a noun or a verb that could be translated as progress.

[xiv] Aristotle, *Politics*1268a.

[xv] Cf. Plato, *Protagoras* 327c-e.

And what does Diodotus say? He says: No, we are less gentle than the people in the past. We use capital punishment on a scale [on] which it was never used before, and surely not in the olden times. Did I make it relatively clear now to you? So there is no progress in wisdom, or, to be more cautious, there is less of a progress in wisdom than you believe and than Pericles told you, and there is surely less progress in gentleness than you believe. That is, I would say, a revision of the scheme used hitherto and especially in the introduction by Thucydides himself. That is it.

If I bring in now your question regarding the speech of Thucydides, Thucydides's speech seems to be in favor of the simple progress of this view. But I must correct myself immediately. When we think of the judgments of Thucydides which he uses as beacons—statements on Sparta in book 1 and book 8—they give the prize to Sparta, moderate Sparta. That this is not literally true we have heard partly from Thucydides and partly from a former speaker. Sparta was not such a prize package, if I may use such a vulgar expression, as Thucydides seems to say. But this statement nevertheless points to something: it reminds us of the fact that the praise of Athens must be qualified. This is the minimum that the praise of Sparta means. Athens is not so perfect as it surely would appear to be if we listen only to Pericles's speech, obviously. There is a case for Sparta. I think that the praise of Sparta means somewhat more than that; that is the minimum which it means.

Now the methodic rule at which I think the questioner was aiming is this, then, and I think I have stated it before. The explicit judgments of Thucydides—you know, the things which we get straight from the horse's mouth and which we would esteem most highly—must be esteemed most highly, but they must be interpreted. They are only the opening statements of a long argument in which his narrative as well as his speeches by his speakers have to be considered also. Then we would finally arrive at the true view, the full view of Thucydides. Thucydides's judgments are beginnings. We have such beautiful examples, for example, in the Mytilenaean affair—we have discussed this last time—a judgment on the cruelty of the original Athenian decision, judgment on the beastliness of Cleon. Perfectly clear. Not a word of blame for the Spartans and the Thebans at Plataea. That doesn't mean that he thought they were flawless but, as has been mentioned before, [that] they were beneath criticism. The Athenians at least deserved criticism.

Student: [. . .] for this argument of Thucydides that when—this would be a criticism of Diodotus about progress—but taking the piece on Protagoras where he says it is not as though we have come to a certain state of (if you want to use the word) evolution, or better men, that we have become cruel. It is not as though Zeus gives us political virtue so that we can become cruel, that could be what Diodotus is protesting against in capital punishment, simply because we can have no justice—

LS: I would be at a loss now to say something about what you say about the *Protagoras*. No, no, but I believe that Protagoras truly implies that at the beginning there was perfect savagery.

Same Student: Yes, but he thinks that from the perfectly savage origins we come to more refined origins, and at the same time—

LS: To a more refined state.

Same Student: To a more refined state, and yet in the beginning there is no such thing as capital punishment simply because there is no such thing as organized society.

LS: Yes, all right, but it means taking a very—almost like Paches, who said [to the mercenary commander Hippias], "I promise to bring you back into the city," and then he brings him back and has him shot.[xvi] It was legal, but a sharp practice. You had no capital punishment in the beginning, surely, but you had the killing. So, in other words, that doesn't make life gentle that there are no[18] law courts. We are concerned here now not with capital punishment or its absence, but with gentleness or severity. And you can have an amazing degree of severity without law courts, as you can see every day in Chicago in these gangland killings.

Same Student: I think the point I'm trying to make is that you can't have organized severity unless a high form of gentleness exists.

LS: Some form of gentleness—some form. Oh, we have some contemporary examples in our present-day world; you read every day now about [. . .] and other famous stories, and that is a well-organized society in which there was not much of gentleness there. You know? But let us not go into that now, and look briefly at the speeches regarding Plataea. First the speech of the Plataeans. The premise of the Spartans is—you know this atrocious question, they ask each Plataean: What did you do for Sparta in the present war? Nothing? Head off! That is easy enough. It is incredible. If it is a capital crime not to have helped Sparta and her allies in the present war, the Plataeans have no hope whatever. But in that case the Spartans simply identify the just with what is immediately profitable to the Spartans; i.e., they abandon every claim to justice, every claim to be judges. The Plataeans reply that not to help enemies is not an unjust act—of course not—nor is it an unjust act not to betray their allies, Athenian allies. They refer then very impressively to their merit in the Persian War, where they were allied with the Greeks against the Medes, and the Thebans at that time were the traitors—they [had] sided with the Persian king against the Greeks—and the Thebans have now the nerve to play up their Greek[19] [patriotism]. And the action against the Thebans in the beginning of this present war was according to the law established for all, as they say [in] chapter 56, namely, it is legitimate to repel force by force. The Thebans attacked them in peace—

Student: Don't the Plataeans find awkward their slaying—

LS: Of course the Plataeans committed one severe crime, as you point out: they slew the one hundred eighty Theban prisoners, and that is of course a difficulty because now they are in the same boat. They say, "We surrendered with our hands upheld," i.e., cannot justly be killed according to the law of the Greeks. And that is of course awkward

[xvi] Thucydides 3.34.2-3.

because they did the same thing. That is their weak spot, however just they may have been. And the interesting thing is this: were the Thebans not so particularly vicious and vengeful to the Plataeans because of this atrocity—that we must consider, you know, perhaps the Thebans would not have been that nasty if the Plataeans had kept their own part of the bargain and left the Theban prisoners alive. We do not know that. It is not such a very simple case.

Now a few words about the Theban speech. Now the Thebans are from one point of view a very terrible sport, but you can rightly say that was ancient history, because the Plataeans reminded everyone present of the abominable, disgraceful actions of the Thebans during the Persian War, when the Thebans sided with the Persian king. They have of course a ready answer: "That was not we, or us, that was those bad oligarchs who ruled Thebes at that time," a distinction you will remember perhaps from the third book, the beginning of the third book of the *Politics*. So the first thing the Thebans must do is defend their Medizing, i.e., their fighting with the Medes in the Persian War. And then they bring forth their charge against the Plataeans. The Plataeans have done wrong too; they have done wrong to the Greeks and hence deserve punishment. And this applies of course still more to the Athenians and to all other allies, allies of the Athenians; because Athens is the public enemy of Greece, everyone allied with Athens is a public enemy of the Greeks.

Now they point out quite justly the clear crime of the Plataeans which consisted in the slaying of the one hundred eighty Theban prisoners. The emphasis is all the time on the justice of the capital punishment of the Plataeans. Their own merits, the Plataeans' own merits, would only aggravate the crime and hence the punishment. The principle: tit for tat. Their punishment is even smaller than the crime. In other words, they would have to have special embellishments like drawing and quartering, or whatever it might be, in order to get what they want. There is no attempt made to show that it is profitable to kill the Plataeans. That I think we must consider.

Student: I find rather surprising that the Thebans would advance the argument that the democracy could not take the responsibility for the actions of an oligarchy in a war in which the general picture by and large was that the Spartans were in the theater of the oligarchy.

LS: That can easily be corrected. The Thebans are clever enough to take care of that. They say there are two kinds of regimes which are respected, and they are democracy and oligarchy. In both cases there is some principle of justice. But what we had at that time was the rule of a tiny clique of an oligarchy. They use a different term, *dynasteia,* which is a kind of tyranny of a few families. Oligarchy is still a body of people [. . .]

Now this is I think the key theme of the third book, if I may say so, Mytilene and Plataea as exemplifying Athens and Sparta. The Spartans or Peloponnesians do not raise the question of advantage: Is it advantageous to kill the Plataeans at all? But the Athenians do, even Cleon does. The Athenian view of punishment, even Cleon's, is more rational than the Peloponnesians'. Killing, at least this kind of killing, must serve a purpose; it

cannot be mere revenge. And what is done in Plataea is mere revenge. The purpose of killing cannot be taken for granted in matters of such gravity, so that you can simply say, "crime, punishment." We have to consider whether it is wise to punish, at least in political cases. This implies—forgive me for drawing this obvious conclusion—[that] the Athenians are gentler than the Spartans, to say nothing of the Thebans. And the obvious confirmation of that is that there is not a single voice raised on behalf of the Plataeans in the Peloponnesian camp, whereas there is a very powerful voice raised on behalf of the Mytilenaeans in the Athenian camp. And Thucydides himself recalls his own judgment very simply in chapter 68: The Spartans gave in to the Thebans with a view to their own profit. In other words, it had absolutely nothing to do with justice. Although there was a crime committed by Plataea in killing these one hundred eighty prisoners,[20] they were not killed for that.

Now we have seen the remarkable example of Spartan gentleness in book 1, you remember, where they behaved so decently to the Messenians after the capture of Ithome.[xvii] That is also important. Why did they do that? Because there was an oracle telling them that the suppliant of Zeus of Ithome must be spared. The application to Athens: the Athenians did not need oracles in order to spare the Mytilenaeans. That is also important for what follows.

Now the next great story is the story of the revolt at Corcyra, and a terrible civil war with all the refinements of the same. It should be noted that the nastiness was started by the upper class; the demos was as well included, but it was in reaction. The original beastliness was with the upper class. Thucydides makes this quite clear. This reminds me of a passage in Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* which deserves very much consideration, especially in view of the fact that a certain "anti-democratic prejudice" is taken for granted when we read Plato or Aristotle. In the *Constitution of Athens* when he speaks of the conduct of the demos after the expulsion of the Thirty Tyrants in 403, Aristotle speaks of "the customary good-naturedness of the common people." A remarkable statement.[xviii] It could be ironical, but I don't believe it is. Here, surely, in Corcyra, however beastly the demos was it acted on provocation. Now the Corcyraean revolt discusses sedition, is explicitly described again as a motion [. . .][xix] It brings about the preponderance of compulsion, necessity, which compels men to do things they dislike. I suggested on an earlier occasion there is a kind of certain kinship between motion and necessity versus rest, freedom. *Kinēsis*, or whatever you might provisionally call it. It makes most men worse; he doesn't say all men.

And then there comes in chapter 82 this famous passage about the change of the customary meaning of words, a passage of infinite importance for the understanding of Thucydides because it shows you so simply his "system of values" in the most straightforward way you can imagine. Now what happens in such a decay? A

[xvii] Thucydides 1.103.1-3.

[xviii] Aristotle, *Constitution of the Athenians* 22.4, but Strauss misstates the context of this statement.

[xix] Presumably the inaudible word was the Greek *kinesis,* motion or movement, a verbal cognate of which (*ekinēthē)* Thucydides uses of *stasis* or civil strife in the present passage (3.82.1).

depreciation of moderation, and a boosting of daring and of course of brutality, greed, and insincerity. But these key words we remember from the Sparta–Athens antithesis. Sparta: moderation; Athens: daring. And Thucydides speaks here clearly more on the side of moderation than on the side of daring. In this context there is the only mention in the whole work of divine law—divine law, and piety, if these two have any importance. The cause of the whole thing is greed—the desire to have more—and love of honor, love of superiority, of being recognized as superior.

The net result is by the way very interesting: the victory of sheer brutality even over the lowest kind of cleverness. Sheer brutality. It is a beautiful picture of what happens in such situations, but[21] we can only refer here to one key point. The principles to which Thucydides here appeals as authoritative—moderation and so on, the law and so on—clearly decide on the basis of evidence given by him in favor of Sparta against Athens, not of Sparta as she behaved and against Athens as she behaved, but in favor of Sparta as what she meant to be or claimed to be, and against Athens as she claimed to be. Athens claimed not to be the city of moderation but the city of daring and so on, and therefore it seems to settle the case in favor of the former speaker who defended Sparta and myself. But I must make one objection. These principles are stated here by Thucydides in the context of intra-*polis* morality: intra-*polis*, not inter-*polis*. No conclusion, it seems to me, can be drawn without very great caution from these statements regarding foreign policy matters about imperialism and non-imperialism. [. . .] that we must be very careful. This high morality within the *polis* could go together with I don't say an immorality, but an absence of morality in foreign relations. The *polis* cannot be a *polis* if there is not this overall—if these are not the overall habits of the citizen body.

In the sequel, in chapter 88—by the way, we have done infinite injustice to this chapter on *stasis* in Corcyra, but we must make some selection. In this whole connection, I can mention this only, in chapter 87 he speaks of the plague and the earthquake, then in chapter 89 there is again something also about earthquakes, and in between there is a story of certain happenings in Sicily where he records the myth—you know, where there is a volcano where the god Hephaestus is said to do his work in a myth preceded and followed by a physiological statement, physiological in the Greek sense, dealing with signs of nature. The phenomenon which he describes in 89 is the opposite of that described in book 2, chapter 102; here there is an increase in the sea, the sea conquering the land. In 3.89, we had, you remember, an increase in the land over the sea.[xx] This I mention in passing, but only to indicate how present this question of nature always is in Thucydides. In chapter 90 beginning; will you read that, please.

Reader:
The same summer divers others, as they had several occasions, made war in Sicily; so also did the Sicilians amongst themselves and the Athenians with their confederates. But I will make mention only of such most memorable

[xx] Strauss evidently misspeaks: 3.89 (the passage currently under discussion) features a triumph of sea over land; it is, as he himself has just said, the earlier passage 2.102 that records a triumph of land over sea.

things as were done either by the confederates there with the Athenians or against the Athenians by the enemy.[xxi]

LS: But why does he say that? It is very rarely that Thucydides makes such remarks about what he mentions and omits. We are already accustomed to this. Of course he will not say the irrelevant things, that goes without saying. And it is especially strange that this subject Sicily is dropped at the end of this chapter and not taken up again until chapter 99. When you draw up a list of the subjects of this whole section, beginning with chapter 86, you get roughly this order. I read them to you very quickly: Athenians in Sicily; plague in Athens; Athenians in Sicily; earthquakes, etc.; Athenians in Sicily; the Athenians in Melos and Boeotia; Spartans in Trachinia; Demosthenes in central Greece; Athenians in Sicily; Sparta in central Greece; Athenians in Sicily; Athenians purify Delos; Sparta in central Greece; Athenians in Sicily; eruption of Aetna. You know there is a certain pattern here. Athenians in Sicily, again and again. And two broad subjects are repeated: Athenians in Sicily is repeated six times, natural catastrophes occur in three items.

If one takes out the chapter on the Athenians in Delos, when the Athenians purify Delos, one sees that the Athenians in Sicily occurs only in the odd-numbered things—not in all, but in some odd numbers: 1, 3. And the natural catastrophes would only occur in the even numbers. There are other features of the same kind, strange features in this section—I will show immediately later what that is. In 93 we find another example of Spartan harsh and ignoble conduct—oh yes, the story in northern Greece, when they make settlement near Thessaly, you know, and the whole thing fails because of stupid conduct.[xxii]

Student: One can count this repetition also: "The same summer, about the same time." "In the same summer" occurs five times.

LS: That is very common; then you would have to make the complete statistics throughout the work—that you couldn't do on the basis of this particular thing.

Now then there comes the story of Demosthenes's rash and hopeful attempt and its disastrous end. But Demosthenes is prudent; he does not return to Athens after the defeat. He knows what they are going to do to him. This remark which our speaker quoted about the quality of the fallen Athenian soldiers, you know, that this was the elite: never did so many first-rate Athenians fall in this war as in this particular battle. I wonder whether this does not have to be connected with the funeral speech. These men who fell here in central Greece would have been a much more proper object of a funeral speech than the ones about which Pericles had spoken. Did you not make a remark along these lines in what you said?

Same Student: No, it was the speaker in favor of Sparta who made that remark.

LS: Oh, I'm sorry. Yes, of course. I see.

[xxii] Thucydides 3.92-93.

Student: In introducing the funeral speech, Thucydides does say that they continued to observe the prescribed ceremony and that they followed this on all the occasions—this was not the only funeral.

LS: Yes, yes, I know; of course not, but I don't think anything is said about the transportation of corpses to Athens. Now there is a description of Demosthenes which makes very exciting reading, but unfortunately we cannot go into that. In 114 there is a remark that I underlined, I don't know for what reason. Let me see what it is. In other words, after this splendid victory, of course Demosthenes is sure that it is safe for him to return again. That is the end of the this particular story, but the true exploit of Demosthenes comes only in the next book.

Student: Is there time to propose a highly speculative question?

LS: No, because I must bring [something] in unless we forget this whole issue we discussed before. Therefore I must say a few words about the remarkable chapter 104, which you know disturbs the plan which I have indicated before. The story of Athens' purification of Delos, of the island of Delos. Now here we have the last reference to Homer, the only reference to Homer—except for the short reference to Homer in the funeral speech, which we don't have to count—outside of the Archaeology. Thucydides goes back here for a moment to the very early history of Greece. The Athenians, we learn, do on a larger scale what the tyrant Peisistratus had done before, that is also—Peisistratus will come up later; there will be the whole story of Peisistratus later on.

The rule: both dying and giving birth must not take place on the sacred island of Delos; they are to be regarded as impure. And there is a connection between that, because on the island of Delos, Apollo, the god of Delos, was born. The birth of a god is not an impure act, that is impossible. Now what is that? We will read perhaps a few lines before the first quotation.

Reader:
There had also in old time been great concourse in Delos, both of Ionians and of the islanders round about. For they then came to see the games, with their wives and children, as the Ionians do now the games at Ephesus. There were likewise matches set of bodily exercise and of music; and the cities did severally set forth dances. Which things to have been so, is principally declared by Homer in these verses of his hymn to Apollo—[xxiii]

LS: Now let stop here for a moment. So in the olden time, gymnastic and music contests and choruses, and this is confirmed by Homer: things of the olden times confirmed by the oldest poet. And then let us not read the verse but go on afterward.

Reader:

[xxiii] Thucydides 3.104.

That there were also matches of music and that men resorted thither to contend therein he again maketh manifest in these verses of the same hymn. For after he hath spoken of the Delian dance of the women, he endeth their praise with these verses, wherein also he maketh mention of himself—

LS: "Of himself," then he quotes eight other verses. He brings out the point that in the beginning there is also a music contest, not only a gymnic, or gymnastic contest, but also a music contest, i.e., a contest in which Homer himself could participate; therefore the mention of Homer himself is not extraordinary. Now after the quotation of the verses:

Reader:
So much hath Homer witnessed touching the great meeting and solemnity celebrated of old in the isle of Delos. And the islanders and the Athenians, since that time, have continued still to send dancers along with their sacrificers; but the games and things of that kind were worn out, as it is likely, by adversity till now the Athenians restored the games—

LS: Not the "games": the "game," "the contest."

Reader:
and added the horse race, which was not before.

LS: I know much too little, and the commentaries which I have occasion to observe are silent about it according to a strict rule of commentators, religiously observed. The rule is this: Be very detailed and very informative about matters which are not terribly important; but if it is important, a prudent silence. You see the point, if we read that: the olden times witnessed by Homer are not simply inferior to what happens now. You see, in the beginning you had music, gymn[ast]ic contests, plus choruses. And then later the contests were dropped, [but] the choruses remained.[22] The contests were dropped, and then the Athenians restored the contest—he says the contest. Did they restore the music contest? I don't know, but I would be very anxious to know. But surely he changes from this plural to the singular, there can be no question of that. I wish I knew someone who knew everything about the contests in Delos. And they [sc. the Athenians] surely add[ed] horse races. You know in the beginning of the *Republic* you also have the horse race.

So in other words, it is not quite clear whether the Athenians restored the full Homeric splendor or whether they omit the decisive point, the music contest where Homer himself could participate. That is an interesting story. One commentator, a good older one, says this: the first five verses prove only the existence of a gymnastic contest and choruses, not the musical contest; therefore it is necessary to quote the last eight verses. I think that is perfectly correct, but I would add the last verse in which Homer mentions himself for this reason, because the subject is music contests. There is a passage in Diodorus Siculus [. . .] in book 12, chapter 58, which I had no occasion to look up; it would be interesting to see whether he says something about the restoration of music contests there.[xxiv]

[xxiv] Diodorus Siculus (i.e. the Sicilian) was a compiler of the First Century CE whose *Bibliotheca Historica* (*Historical Library*) provided a universal history with a Sicilian focus. The extatnt

I think this is a very important chapter, and there is a connection with the Diodotus story, a correction of the simple scheme which you know Thucydides himself developed in the Archaeology, [and] which in a rhetorical exaggeration is the nerve of the funeral speech—the thought [that] we are at the top in wisdom and humanity—and which is challenged only by Diodotus. [The chapter is][23] concerned—a most decisive point—[24][with] the seemingly trivial story that in this particular year the Athenians also sent—Thucydides doesn't say a word, by the way, why the purification takes place in this particular case. The commentators say, perfectly rightly, that there was a connection with the plague, and the kind of action in order to appease Apollo, [who as] you know in the beginning of the *Iliad*[25] is responsible for that kind of thing. Thucydides doesn't allude to any [of this] because what he had to say I believe was of a different character.

Now this is an important point which I thought I should not suppress under any circumstance, and this strange thing which I believe Athens to have observed regarding Sicily. You know that he constantly interrupts the Sicilian—it is really annoying. Well, the story of Sicily is absolutely uninteresting; it is not a beautiful story like the capture of Sphacteria in the fourth book where you can't stop reading. Of course Thucydides was not such a nasty man as to interrupt it, because there was in the meantime some little affair in Lesbos or I don't know where. You know? But that is very artistically done, and I think the thing to which he points by these strange proceedings is this judgment which stands out for the simple reason that you don't find such a quote—the only other quotation from Homer is in the eighth chapter of the first book, where a single verse is quoted. Here you have thirteen. And this is taken from the Homeric Hymn to Apollo. Today of course people don't believe that it was written by Apollo,[xxv] but I wonder—in the last verse it is said, or Homer says of himself that he is of the island of Chios. You know seven cities fought for the honor of being the birth town of Homer, and here Chios, one of the most powerful allies of Athens, is mentioned. And the Chians later on in the eighth book get a very high grade, together with the Spartans, as the only ones who combine moderation with prosperity.[xxvi] I don't know[26] [whether] there is any connection with that, but it is surely a peculiarity.

Student: Can't one compare this to Diodotus's speech? Isn't this a return—you mention the progress in arts, and then you say there is an [. . .] I am confused about those things; I just want to state them. Isn't this return to nature a return to Homer or something even prior to Homer?

LS: Yes, that is a very tempting suggestion which no one who has lived after Homer can completely avoid. You know, when you have this nature and law distinction you cannot help saying: All right, if law is essentially posterior to nature, there must have been a time

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sections comprise 32 volumes of the Loeb Classical Library, edited and translated by C. H. Oldfather (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933-67). In book 12, chapter 58 (the passage noted by Strauss but not consulted by him), D. mentions that the Athenians renewed the festival but he does not address the question raised by Strauss of the restoration of the musical contests.

[xxv] Strauss evidently misspeaks, saying Apollo instead of Homer.

[xxvi] Thucydides 8.24.4.

or times when there was only nature, and not yet law—what Hobbes calls a state of nature. Now there would be the question whether this is a gentle or a cruel state: savage according to Hobbes and nice according to Locke. That is a secondary question. Why does this question not occur in this way in the older view? Why did the ancient thinkers not pose the question in this form, of the state of nature in the Hobbean-Lockean sense? Well, it is difficult of course to translate the "state of nature" into Greek, as far as I can see, but there would be of course a Greek equivalent: "when men lived according to nature." "Live according to nature," that is never said in this form. How come?

Student: Weren't they too close to the barbarians to have any illusions about what nonpolitical life was?

LS: Well, one thing we can say for good old Hobbes, he also had no illusions. How did he say it? "Nasty, brutish, short—" What is the fourth? "Solitary." When I was in England I saw a public debate among the students there: "The Life of a Cambridge Undergraduate is Solitary, Nasty, Brutish, and Short." That is not the question. Why do they not—

Student: I have an answer in the rejection—there is no rejection of the gods; they are all taken as simply presupposed here. A state of nature would be a state prior to all *nomos*; I would say prior to all belief in divine things, even.

LS: Yes, but do you have any reason to believe that Thucydides believed in the gods?

Same Student: No, but he doesn't ever say there was a time when—I don't know that.

LS: Well, part of the reason is, I think—it will not be sufficient, but all Greek thinkers whom I know and who spoke about this more explicitly would deny that this is the natural state. The natural state of a man is the state in which a man leads a truly human life. That is not only the view of Plato and Aristotle—that would go[27] without saying—but it is the view of Lucretius and, say, of the Epicurean tradition. In other words, nature in the Hobbean view, where it is clearest—and in Locke it is not so visible, but it is also there—in the modern view nature is regarded as something to be fought, something to be overcome, conquered, or whatever you call it, and that I think the Greeks never meant. I mean, even those who had those nasty tyrannical doctrines like Thrasymachus and Callicles, they both saw that life according to nature is the life of a tyrant. But how can you live as a tyrant without a *polis*? So in other words, they would say the natural life according to nature in the state of nature is a state which must have embodied *nomos*, because something like *nomos* is necessary even for a tyrannical city. You know? On the contrary, the characteristic of the Greek nasty people, if I may say so—what is ordinarily understood by the term sophist—they would understand the state of nature as much in political terms, if with a different intention, as Plato and Aristotle. Whereas nature would not come into its own where there is no possibility of lording it over others and enjoying yourself [. . .] That cannot be done in deserts, or, you know, in trenches, as Hobbes presents the situation. In other words, nature is for all Greeks, I would say, until the contrary is proved to me—for all Greeks thinkers at least—an indication of something

which is the standard. The standard. What is according to nature is desirable, is good. And that is questioned by the moderns, and therefore the problem doesn't occur in this form.

Student: Yes, but what about the additional problem in Thucydides that Homer was in the beginning—

LS: Yes, but Homer in the beginning appeared as a beautiful example of the weakness of the ancients. His mind was as weak as the ancient cities were politically, militarily, and economically weak. We read all these stories about Helen and the generosity of the Greeks going with Agamemnon to punish this crime against hospitality, and this kind of thing. Here he appears in a different light, only for a moment, but that is very important. And especially since this connection with the Diodotus speech, which is the first reference—now you must not forget. A state of nature is not, I think, the association which would occur to me. What Diodotus suggests—very[28] surreptititously, but powerfully, when you follow his remark—is the age of Cronos: the age of Cronos, the age of gentleness, no punishment. Well, he doesn't go so far; he only says there were softer punishments, he doesn't say absence of punishment. That you can think through easily, but this view, [that] the development from ancient times is not simply progress, if I state it as cautiously as I ought, is a great corrective not only to the funeral speech, where you get this picture: until the Persian Wars, and perhaps even inclusively, nothing. And then after the Persian Wars with Themistocles and the empire, and especially in the last generation, and still more especially our generation, we are the ones who have made possible this glory of Athens, and what greater glory can there be? This is of course never said by Thucydides, but it is partly suggested by him in his Archaeology, in his introduction. There you have also a picture of on the whole a progressive movement with a view to the arts that is stated by Thucydides more strongly than by Pericles. Hitherto—we must see what we will find later—hitherto I have seen only these brief remarks in the Diodotus speech, and this chapter where they are relatively near to one another, which indicate a qualification. And I believe that is a very deep qualification, because again, another general rule: the importance of a passage does not consist in the fact that it says the same as what is said in innumerable other passages. A single remark of this kind can be the enlightening passage.

Student: This passage confirms the importance of Diodotus in respect to the notion of progress. Couldn't it be said that he, too, in the passage on Thucydides's judgment, confirms Diodotus's views on political things generally? There is a remarkable correlation between Thucydides's remarks in that and Diodotus's remarks.

LS: You mean insofar as the statement of the simple principles of intra-polis life is stated, there are old-fashioned . . . Is that what you mean?

Same Student: The emphasis upon counsel—

LS: And he also mentions there and only there the divine law.[xxvii] The only praise of piety [. . .] [They] do not mean piety strictly speaking, they mean only[29] what does not run counter to divine law. *Hosios* means rather the profane as distinguished from the holy, but has the sense of meaning the "permitted," the permitted profane, and therefore it has a religious connection. *Sebeia* clearly means worship of the gods. [. . .] The reason why I did not see it [is] because in parts of chapter 82 [there] is something with which I am familiar since a very long time, and familiarity breeds contempt—very wrongly, you know, whereas only excessive familiarity should breed contempt. But you are quite right. Well, of course we don't know what surprises are still in store; we have gone through only book 3.

Student: On this Homer thing, this whole episode sticks right out from everything else. It seems to me that it is almost putting—when you read that list of the order in which they come, Delos sticks out there as a complete contrast to all the other things. It is so peaceful, and the fact that he actually uses a quotation from Homer, by doing this, by using the wording of the Homerh e is saying things which he couldn't say in his own person because it is like a voice from long ago—peaceful, a very peaceful, gracious sort of passage. He couldn't say that himself, and for that reason perhaps it is a literary device. Actually quoting the lines of Homer emphasizes the contrast which this is to the whole of the mess which surrounds—

LS: In other words, do you mean the reminder of peace at its best? Yes, yes, that makes very much sense. But you also found it sticking out. Well, one must of course read the complete hymn, the complete hymn, and there are some "misquotations" [by] Thucydides, you know; that happens almost always on such occasions when one quotes Homeric verses: there is in many cases some deviation, and the belief that they quote from memory I regard as beneath contempt. What is possible, of course, is that there were different readings. That one cannot exclude. But that they should on such solemn occasions quote Homer once in such a book—that he should be careless and slipshod there I regard as impossible. But there are some—unfortunately I have forgotten it; I had the reference to one verse, verse 38, it had something to do in reference to Chios, I do not know what it was.[xxviii] But one would have to study that carefully.

Now Apollo plays a very great role throughout the book. He was the first god mentioned, and if you just look at an index you will see that Apollo occurs more times than any other god. And of course his sister Artemis, who is not mentioned openly, but she is mentioned as the last thing in the whole work, the last sentence being, "and then Tissaphernes went up to Ephesus to sacrifice to Artemis." The last sentence which follows[30] is not in the best manuscripts; that seems to have been done by a scribe. And that is also a thing which we will take up on a better occasion when we come to a discussion of this question. Thucydides ordinarily says at the end of a year, "this was the year number—so the winter

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[xxvii] Since the divine law is mentioned only at 3.82.6 (in the course of the passage on *stasis* or civil strife*),* it seems that this is the statement of Thucydides in his own name to which Strauss understands his questioner to refer as parallel to the earlier speech of the character Diodotus.
[xxviii] Verse 38 of the *Hymn to Delian Apollo* describes Chios as "brightest of the islands that lie in the sea."

came to the end and therewith the year number *n* of the war which Thucydides has narrated." And this phrase of Thucydides takes a stereotyped form, but "which Thucydides has narrated" does not occur in all cases, and one must make complete statistics of that, and I think one can also discern a pattern there which is of some help. We will come to that when we discuss the second part of book 4.

Student: I have a question about the meaning of the sentence in the middle of chapter 84—

LS: You mean [book 3], 84.

Same Student: Yes, the last sentence on the page.

LS: I don't have your translation. Wait, chapter 3.84 is universally regarded as not by Thucydides; I have no judgment on that, I simply prudently bow. But I am never convinced, for this reason: because I do not believe that the editors consider the possibility that Thucydides's stylistic principles are much larger, are not simply exhausted by what a strict grammar of early Attic prose would regard as possible or not. I have seen a few cases where I venture to set my own judgment against this sort of thing because I see that these allegedly meaningless things are meaningful. But at any rate, what was the passage?

Same Student: "And the common course of life being at that time confounded in the city, the nature of man, which is wont even against law to do evil, gotten now above the law, showed itself with delight to be too weak for passion, too strong for justice, and enemy to all superiority." I wonder about this term "nature of man"—

LS: That occurs, does it? "And the nature of man having become victorious over the laws," that it says. "The nature of man which is accustomed to act unjustly also against the laws."

Same Student: This doesn't seem to be consistent with that which we have seen from Aristotle and Plato, does it?

LS: Why not? I mean, what do you learn from Callicles, Thrasymachus, and such characters? Justice is against nature. Justice is purely conventional; the many weak men band together to protect themselves, and then they say "equality," the equal treatment of all—you know, that justice is equality. This is against nature but reasonably effective, but of course only on the surface because what is going on in the individual is not controlled by law. And therefore Glaucon's story, if you remember: in their hearts everyone wants to get the most, and[31] [it is] simply mere calculation, and nothing else [which] induces man to act justly when seen. But if someone is eminently clever and courageous he can get away with murder on the largest scale. Of course he must also make some minor concessions to what the many think, [to] their opinion, to their strength. No, no, that is open. I mean, the common basis between, say, Plato or Socrates and the sophists is: We seek the natural good for man. The difference is: Does justice form a part of the natural

good of man or not? Socrates[32] [says] yes, the sophists, no. Very roughly that is the issue, but the basis is common: that what is by nature good for man is the good is not only not questioned, but presupposed.

Student: [. . .]

LS: No, no, but even apart from that, could not someone say that while *nomos* somehow enters into the nature of man and is required by the nature of man, yet there is something in man belonging to his nature which rebels against it? I mean not a corrupted nature, but a—could one not say that?

Session 8: no date
Book 4, chapters 1-70

Leo Strauss: I did not quite understand why you said that Demosthenes deviates from the Periclean policy.[i]

Student: What I meant was this. Whereas Pericles [. . .] emphasis on Lacadaemonian territory, and in the case of Pylos—now in book 3 he[ii] made a great effort to try to take Boeotia out of the war, and it failed, in other words. This is what I meant by the shift from the Periclean policy, the shift definitely in favor of conquest.

LS: Yes, that I would question. I mean, it surely took on this form through Cleon's policy superimposed on Demosthenes's strategy, but I don't see why the Demosthenean strategy is not compatible with the Periclean policy, namely, to force Sparta to give up her aim to destroy the Athenian empire. Now Demosthenes's greatest feat in Pylos led exactly to this consequence.

Same Student: But by chance.

LS: Yes, that I wonder; we will have to take that up. And even if by chance, I would say if you grasped at [a] chance offered to you without any—offered to you by chance, but you grasped it, then there is some merit in that. At any rate, Demosthenes succeeded in compelling the Spartans to come cap in hand to Athens and to call off the war. And that is exactly what Pericles wanted. I mean, whether you do it by an extended landing on Spartan soil or by a short raid, that is maybe of some tactical difference, but it wouldn't affect the fundamental policy. But let us see it when we come to that.

Now you probably know that the division of the history into books, into the eight books, does not necessarily go back to Thucydides. I believe most people would even say today that it surely does not go back to Thucydides. There was another division into thirteen books, as tradition tells us, and we have no right to assume, at any rate, that this division of the books is of Thucydides's own making. Still, it is convenient to make use of this traditional division. And when we compare book 4, which we begin now, with book 3, which we discussed last week—in book 3 the big event is the opposition between the Plataean affair and the Mytilenaean affair, the destruction of the Plataeans by the Spartans and the salvation of the Mytilenaeans by the Athenians which throws light on both cities. Now we have a similar parallelism in book 4. There is the story of Pylos,[iii] the great Athenian success; and then later on in the second half of book 4, Brasidas's very

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] Presumably the student means Demosthenes, although the text offers no evidence that the decision to undertake the Boeotian expedition of which Demosthenes was joint commander was the result of his influence.
[iii] Although Hobbes's spelling was *Pylus,* the more accurate rendering *Pylos* is universally used today.

successful campaign in northern Greece, culminating in the capture of Amphipolis which is the biggest Spartan success. And the result of these two military events is then the peace of Nicias in 421.

Now the hero in the first part of book 4 is clearly Demosthenes, as the speaker has seen very well. He has a special position altogether. Let us look at chapter 2, toward the end, where his special position in Athenian affairs is clearly recognized. The last sentence of chapter 2, do you have that?

Reader:
To Demosthenes also, who ever since his return out of Acarnania had lived privately, they gave authority, at his own request, to make use of the same galleys, if he thought good so to do, about Peloponnesus.[iv]

LS: You see, he is not in command. That is important, he is not in command, but he nevertheless has a position of trust. He has a certain kind of discretion which no one else might have had at that time. And now there comes the story which—read the beginning of chapter 3 to see what we have to think about this chance business. Was Pylos entirely a matter of chance? Read that phrase, the beginning of chapter 3.

Reader:
As they sailed by the coast of Laconia and had intelligence that the Peloponnesian fleet was at Corcyra already,

LS: Let us look at the map. Pylos is here; Corcyra, the ally of Athens, is here and [. . .] so it is not very far as the crow files from Pylos to Sparta. Let us go on where we were.

Reader:
but Demosthenes willed them to put in first at Pylus, and when they had done what was requisite there, then to proceed in their voyage.[v]

LS: You see, Demosthenes intended to land in Pylos.

Student: Yes, but the next sentence is where chance comes in.

LS: But still, if someone gets [1]what he wants in the first place by chance, it is surely not altogether chance. That was his plan, and only because he didn't have the authority he couldn't put it into practice. But then *tychē,* chance, came to his assistance. Yes, and then they contradicted him—where were you?

Reader:
But whilst they denied to do it, the fleet was driven into Pylus by a tempest that then arose by chance. And presently Demosthenes required them to fortify the place, alleging that he came with them for no other purpose, and showing how there was great store of

[iv] Thucydides 4.2.
[v] Thucydides 4.3.

timber and stone and that the place itself was naturally strong and desert, both it and a great deal of country about.

LS: Let us stop here one moment. It was by nature strong. Later on in chapter 4, when this thought is restated by Thucydides in his own name, he states what Demosthenes said as an indirect speech. Thucydides says in the last sentence of chapter 4—can you read that?

Reader:
For the greatest part of the place was strong by nature.[vi]

LS: No, that's bad. That is a bad translation of Hobbes's; I am sorry to say that about that great man. But he says "the greatest part of the place was itself strong." Now this is a subtlety of no great interest to most of you, but I would nevertheless mention that. What is called by Demosthenes "by nature strong" is called by Thucydides "is itself strong." Now you remember perhaps from Plato's language in the *Republic* and many other places when he says "justice itself"; "justice itself": the idea of justice. That is the nature of justice. There is a beautiful confirmation of that from Thucydides. What a thing itself is, that is its nature; I mean, what it is especially in contradistinction to what people do of it. The place may not be itself strong, and then you make it strong by fortifications. Yes? That what a thing is by nature is the thing itself, this trivial thing, I believe it has very profound implications and I thought I should merely bring the fact to your attention that you have it not only in Plato but even in Thucydides. And that it is told in connection with Demosthenes I believe is not entirely accidental. At least I do not know a parallel to that anywhere else in Thucydides. We will take that up later.

And now the story as it was told by the speaker. We have to say a word about Demosthenes's speech to his soldiers. The details are very interesting, how Demosthenes gets everything he wants although he has no authority. But he has a certain insistence, and [by] chance the soldiers get bored and so they are willing to do some fortification just in order to get out of their boredom. But these chance things would not have had the effect if Demosthenes had not thought all the time about what he wanted. Now then he makes his speech to the soldiers in chapter 10. It looks as if Demosthenes has landed his men in another dangerous situation—you know, he had a certain gambling quality, as we have seen in book 3. And Brasidas sees very well the point: Brasidas is on the other side, but fortunately Brasidas has no authority. You know, Brasidas is the leading Spartan at that time, not in authority but in natural gifts, just as Demosthenes is the outstanding Athenian in this situation. And the key point which Demosthenes makes is the Athenians' great naval experience. The situation is very bad for them, he says, but by virtue of your great naval experience you will win, and this proves to be decisive. Now do you remember why it was this naval experience, [why it was] that this proved to be decisive in the favor of the Athenians?

Student: Well, it was because [. . .] where or what?

[vi] Thucydides 4.4.

LS: After all, the Spartans were at this time—

Student: No, you asked where or what.

LS: Why was the Athenians' naval experience decisive in this situation, where the Athenians were on land and the Spartans came in?

Student: Because they knew that there were certain occasions from their experience with the sea where the men from the sea had a decisive disadvantage, and this is when they are landing.

LS: So in other words, they knew; they knew from their own experience how the situation would be if they came in and so they were able to counteract the Spartans. So Demosthenes diagnosed the situation correctly. Demosthenes diagnosed what was going to happen on the Spartan side because every Athenian sailor knew what—

Same Student: This particular thing was not a matter of chance—

LS: Surely not. Let me see. He speaks in a passage in the twelfth chapter of—I mean, the key point it seems to me of Demosthenes's speech is that his diagnosis of the situation given in advance is proved to be correct by events later on. So that shows [. . .] And there is a seeming paradoxy[vii] toward the end of chapter 12, that there was a reversal of *tychē*, of chance, that the Athenians fought from land and from Spartan land. Do you find this?

Reader:
So that at this time fortune came so much about, that the Athenians fought from the land, Laconique land, against the Lacedaemonians in galleys; and the—[viii]

LS: The land power comes in by sea into its own land and the naval power is occupying the land, the enemy's island.

Reader:
and the Lacedaemonians from their galleys fought against the Athenians, to get landing in their own now hostile territory. For at that time there was an opinion far spread, that these were rather landmen and expert in a battle of foot, and that in maritime and naval actions the other excelled.

LS: You see, I think what this remark shows is Demosthenes's superiority to that opinion, to that doctrine of the day. The reversal of chance exists only for the *doxa*, not for Demosthenes, who had figured it out in advance. And later on, in chapter 40, there is an unintended reversal of role because the Spartans fight from land—no, no, the ordinary role is this: the Spartans fight from land against infantry, and the Athenians from ships

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[vii] An apparent neologism of Strauss's, here retained as perhaps intending to preserve the Greek etymological original more vividly than conventional English "paradox."
[viii] Thucydides 4.12-13.

against ships. Here you have the Spartans fighting from ships against infantry and the Athenians fighting from land against ships. That is also interesting, but that is unintended. At any rate, the whole thing ends in a tremendous Athenian success, and that is strikingly developed in chapters 15 and 16. The complete collapse of morale in Sparta and a local armistice most favorable to the Athenians is immediately concluded.

Student: [. . .] when they were contemplating the war, I think the Spartan war party made the point that the Athenian naval technique was something that we could learn, and it is implied that our strength on land is something unrelated to technique as such and is something which they will not be able to match.

LS: They did learn it later on in the war, but they hadn't learned it yet. Now the amazing thing—you know the three hundred crack Spartans are now on that island of Sphacteria and they are still there, safe, unconquered. But there is a chance that the siege might be successful and they might be captured. This alone creates a collapse of morale in Sparta, a complete collapse. It is quite amazing. And what Thucydides explicitly says does not explain it.

A peace along Pericles's lines could be had now, thanks to Demosthenes. He is the only one who achieved that purpose. I think that is a great compliment on the part of Thucydides. And now the Spartan ambassadors come to Athens and deliver a speech there, chapters 17 to 20.

Student: Just one question before we go on, were the reversals in the roles [. . .]

LS: The latter, I believe, is somewhat playful or ironical.

Same Student: But would any of this [provide] evidence [2][for] this underlying current of change, that now that the war is upon us even old established things such as the way to wage war—

LS: Perhaps, but I believe it is not necessary to say that. But the main point, I think, is that the victory of the Athenians was truly due to their naval superiority, although it was not a victory of the Athenian navy. Because they knew—that is the key point—they knew the troubles in which an incoming fleet would be at the moment of landing, and therefore they could as land soldiers defeat the marine, the Spartan marine. But the principle of the matter is nonetheless naval superiority, although the application here is certainly land fighting.

Student: There is a parallel to that in something that you brought out in the *Republic*, namely, to defend the state, I think it was against thieves, one had to understand . . .

LS: Sure, sure. In the first book, where he proves that [it is the same with] the knowledge required of the thief [as with the knowledge required] of a guard or a keeper.[3] The policeman and the burglar, their minds must work along exactly the same lines.[ix]

[ix] Cf. *Republic* 333e-334b.

Same Student: And it was interesting the way the Athenian defense strategy was set up around Athens and the Piraeus: their last stand would probably be a defense against a naval assault.

LS: They had also to consider that. [. . .] You know there was this brief [moment] when Brasidas thought for one moment to make a raid on the Piraeus—that was told in the second book, I believe—but the Spartans lost their courage. You remember that?[x] Yes, but this was really successful.

Same Student: There is a strong point here that Demosthenes not only knew that they would be weak, but he knew exactly—presuming that they'd do what he'd do—he worked out exactly where they'd come, exactly the point where they would try to land.

LS: Yes, but if you would reduce it to the principle, it would be the naval experience. Now as for the speech of the Spartans in Athens, I think it is an extremely interesting thing: we note in passing that the Spartans had not asked the oracle in this matter, namely, whether they should sue for peace, although you remember that Apollo had said that he would help them called or uncalled, and now they don't even ask him in this matter.

Now what do they say in this speech? Very roughly this: "You Athenians have had a piece of very good luck and we had a piece of very bad luck. If you are wise, you will not become puffed up with your success. By acting prudently you acquire, in addition to your good luck, honor and glory," i.e., good luck doesn't give you honor and glory. "If you do not act prudently, people will say that you owe your present good fortune to luck." Do you see the contradiction? First they say: You owe your success to good luck and you are now trying to win glory in addition by your wise use of your good luck. And then they say: If you do not act prudently people will say that you owe your present good fortune to luck. In other words, they admit in the second half that the Athenian success was due not merely to luck but to generalship and courage, which I think is true. You see, it is not a matter of mere good luck. And they say also in chapter 18: We made a mistake, and we merely had bad luck. Of course they made a mistake militarily, and especially in that their three hundred men were on this island with Athens controlling the sea lanes, and then they were besieged. They offer peace, alliance, friendship in exchange for the men in Sphacteria, on that island. "The men" is in Greek always *andres*, which I translate into my English—not pidgin English but my special form of English—by "*hombres*." Because you can't do it in English, you know; you can do it of course in Greek and in Latin, but you cannot do it in English. *Andres* [in Greek] and *viri* in Latin, as distinguished from *anthrōpoi* and *homines*. They are always called *andres* until a certain point; that cannot be brought out in the translation where the *hombres* cease to be *hombres* and become simple mortals.

Now the Spartan ambassadors appeal to Athenian generosity with a sly admission of Athens' present superiority. Peace made on this basis will last because of our eternal

[x] Thucydides 2.93-94.

gratitude. You will also earn the gratitude of all Greeks, for since it is undetermined which side started the war—which side is the unjust aggressor—it will be clear that you were responsible for bringing the war to an end. By the way, it is important that this is the first admission of the Spartan side that they might be the aggressors. Later on it will be said explicitly at the beginning of the seventh book.[xi]

They say, of course, nothing of concessions that they are willing to make the Athenians; they promise them a very good reputation, but they don't offer them any concessions. It is possible that the promises of eternal friendship which the Spartans make cannot be trusted, or that they don't mean anything in the way of real concessions. But this does not mean that a peace with Sparta would not have been possible at the time and might not have been wise at that time. In other words, the undeniable dishonesty of the Spartans does not mean that you could not have made some arrangements which could have lasted for some time. If we may take a contemporary example, the undeniable dishonesty of Khrushchev is compatible with the fact that he doesn't want a thermonuclear war. After all, he is also afraid of that. You know that these situations exist. From a later passage I think one could draw the conclusion that Pericles would have made peace under these conditions.

Against this meditation one could make this reflection. When Thucydides makes his overall judgment about Athenian policy in book 2, chapter 65 where he speaks about Pericles in contradistinction to Athenian policies under successors of Pericles, he does not say that the failure of Athens to make peace with Sparta after Pylos was a mistake. He does not mention this failure as a blunder. But I would say this could be perfectly understood, because there Thucydides is thinking of the absolutely decisive things. The failure of the Athenians to make peace after Pylos was not a fatal blunder. It was a mistake, but Athens did not lose the war in the end because of her failure to make peace after Pylos.

Student: When he mentions the Sicilian voyage, he really refers to many other errors that they made. He says, "from whence amongst many other errors proceeded also the voyage into Sicily," so that you can't tell what he means by these many other errors.

LS: That is true. I read this objection somewhere in a commentary and I would say, even granting that Pylos cannot be compared with the Sicilian business in significance—that one must admit—and therefore there was no need to mention it. It may have been included among the many others, that is quite true. Now at any rate, the negotiations are prevented by Cleon, that great lover of justice. He speaks of justice in this connection in chapter 22. And Cleon makes much of the fact that the Spartans want to have secret negotiations. Our great lover of justice, Cleon, says "open covenants, openly arrived at," by which I do not mean any comparison between Cleon and President Wilson,[xii] but it is funny. You know the reason why the Spartans wanted them[xiii] was because they could not

[xi] Thucydides 7.18.2-3.
[xii] The phrase is part of the first of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, set out in a speech delivered on January 8, 1918.
[xiii] Sc. secret negotiations with the Athenians.

make peace with Athens without some little betrayal of their own allies. After all, the three hundred *hombres* on the island, that was a strictly Spartan business and was not an affair of the whole Peloponnesian alliance, and so these things had to be done privately. And then this eternal friendship had to be sprung on a surprised world suddenly—a *fait accompli*, so that they couldn't do anything any more.

Student: In the last sentence in the Spartan speech, Hobbes made a footnote to the effect that the Spartans were agreeing to a kind of [. . .]

LS: Where is that?

Same Student: It is [in] the Spartans' speech to the Athenians.

LS: All right, look up the end of chapter 20 in Hobbes's translation. Maybe that was William Molesworth or some other editor.

Same Student: "For if we and you go one way, you know the rest of Greece, being inferior to us, will honour us in the highest degree."[xiv] Hobbes interpreted this as meaning imperialism.

LS: Yes, you can say [that] what they propose is a kind of Spartan–Athenian diarchy instead of a clear Athenian hegemony. Well, the example which comes to my mind is from German history in the nineteenth century, Germany controlled by Prussia and Austria simultaneously, or either Austria or Prussia in control of Germany. Well, this German example shows that the simplest solution is one hegemonial power rather than two, but one should at least try the other one.

Now this speech of the Spartans in Athens calls for comment for this very simple reason, because it is the only speech of Spartans in Athens in the whole book, and it is a parallel to the only speech of the Athenians in Sparta in book 1. One must see them together. Now the Spartans speak in Athens after their defeat; the Athenians speak in Sparta prior to the war when Athens was on the top of the world. The Spartans preach moderation and good luck, i.e., their own principles as they are stated by Thucydides himself in book 8. But they state their own principles in a situation in which others acting on those principles would be conducive to Spartan well-being, whereas the Athenians state the principles, in Sparta, on which they act—you know, the principles of relatively decent imperialism, as we would say. The Athenians' speech in Sparta is frank, that struck us. It is very, very bold. They say: Yes, our rule is based on the right of the stronger. We can only plead that we are nicer stronger people than others around. But the Spartans are not frank.

There is a passage—I do not know what I meant by my remark here—in chapter 59. In book 2, chapter 59, you will recall, Thucydides told us that the Athenians sent ambassadors to Sparta to negotiate a peace treaty, a truce. And he could have easily elaborated that into a speech, into a formal speech of the Athenians in Sparta, and then

[xiv] Thucydides 4.20.4.

there would have been an amazing parallel. After the plague, the terrific defeat of Athens, the Athenians sent ambassadors to Sparta, and here after the defeat of Pylos the Spartans send ambassadors to Athens. It would have been a perfectly good parallel. You know? Why did Thucydides not do that? Why did he not do that? That is a necessary question. I suggest this explanation: that the disaster of the plague should induce the Athenians to seek peace is not surprising—it was a terrific loss of life. But that the probable loss of three hundred men should induce the Spartans to sue for peace, this is surprising; and that is brought out then by the fact that here you see them in person addressing us. Besides, the Athenians sent their ambassadors to Sparta; those ambassadors might have succeeded in agreeing with Spartan authorities on certain terms of peace, but we can be sure that Pericles would have succeeded in torpedoing this tentative peace. You know, later on, the last speech of Pericles in book 2, chapter 60 following shows that he has complete control of the Athenians and they are no longer interested in peace.

But Sparta would have to had fight the agreement made by their ambassadors in Athens, because in Sparta the war party had completely collapsed though the defeat at Pylos. In Athens the core of the war party, [despite the death of] Pericles, did not collapse after the plague. I think that comes out very clearly through these [. . .] Even after the plague the war was more popular in Athens than it was in Sparta after Pylos. Now there were three hundred men; there were another three hundred Spartans on another big affair, do you remember that? Thermopylae. That I think is a terrific point. In the Persian War, three hundred Spartans go down fighting at Thermopylae, and that was one of the most heroic pages in Greek history. And in the Peloponnesian War you have this similar three hundred men. They don't go down fighting. Some fall, naturally, but the majority are taken prisoner. And the enormous difference[4] [between] the Sparta of the Persian War and the Sparta of the Peloponnesian War is I think beautifully brought out by this contrast, and one has to raise the question why this is so. The explanation given by historians in modern times is that Sparta had suffered terrific losses in an earthquake in the '50s or '60s—I forgot the exact year.[xv] I don't think that Thucydides suggested this explanation. The only explanation which we find in Thucydides—he doesn't say a word here about this complete collapse, but in [book 7], chapter 18 he speaks of the Spartans' uneasiness in the first war, i.e., in the first half of the Peloponnesian War from 431 to 421, because they had a bad conscience. "We Spartans have sinned by breaking the treaty," and therefore they thought their misfortunes were punishments for their sins. The historical truth no one can know, but that I believe is Thucydides's explanation. Thucydides is very reticent about the religious explanations given—he has reasons of his own for that—but that they are effective, that these feelings and opinions are effective, he does not deny. He speaks rarely of it but in decisive passages, so I would assume that this is really so.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but the Spartans at Thermopylae could also simply have tried to run away. You know, you cannot figure out what desperate men simply trying to save their lives at all

[xv] 464 BCE, cf. Thucydides 1.101.

costs—[perhaps they] could make a breakthrough at a certain point and save themselves. I don't know. But the contrast between Thermopylae and Sphacteria is surely striking.

Now I mention in another story when it comes to the Sicilian question in the sequel; in chapter 24 there is a reference to Odysseus and the adventure of Odysseus with Charybdis, of which a rational explanation is given here: simply the straits of Messina. He does not speak of the twin of Charybdis, namely, of the Scylla. So apparently he did not have a rational explanation of the Scylla. The reference to Odysseus I think has here a certain meaning; there is a certain Odyssean element, I believe, in Demosthenes, the true hero of this section. But this in passing.

Let us look at the end of chapter 28, after Cleon has torpedoed the peace and the Athenians [have] regretted it because these Spartans were still safe on the island. Let us see at the end of chapter 28. Well, the Athenians are now apprehensive that the Spartans might stay there in Sphacteria till the end of their lives and nothing will come out of it. And therefore Cleon had to do something about the reduction of the island, and he says: Well, let me go. I will do it in twenty days. I would like to mention in anticipation that the strategy pursued by Cleon on the island was Demosthenes's strategy. I think that comes out perfectly clear[ly]. Demosthenes was the man who wanted the light-armed soldiers because he was sure that they could reduce the heavy-armed Spartan[s], and he had already asked for these men. And the only thing now is that Cleon went with them. But the tactics were entirely Demosthenes. Now the last one or two sentences of chapter 28—what does he say?

Reader:
This vain speech moved amongst the Athenians some laughter and was heard with great content of the wiser sort.

LS: The word is not wiser; it is a word which I translate always by moderate, *sōphrōn*.

Reader:
For of two benefits, the one must needs fall out: either to be rid of Cleon—

LS: Which was their greatest hope.

Reader:
or, if they were deceived in that, then to get those Lacadaemonians into their hands. [xvi]

LS: It is very interesting what these *sōphrones* think. We would say: Well, if Cleon failed, good riddance; if Cleon wins, then we have a big victory. But they prefer getting rid of Cleon to a victory. They are more interested, that is, in the restoration of domestic order than in success in foreign affairs. That is very important for the meaning of moderation. Well, just as in private life, the first thing for a man should be to bring himself into order, and not his competitive successes or failures with other beings. The same applies to cities. The most important thing is that the city is in good shape, and

[xvi] Thucydides 4.28.

victory and defeat is a secondary consideration. That is of course a view underlined by Plato's and Aristotle's political philosophy as a whole, but it is a view not peculiar to the philosophers but characteristic of a large group of men called the men of moderation. That is perhaps alien to us because of our modern political tradition, [which] is much more impressed by foreign policy. It sounds very strange, and I'm willing to prove that. Kant—the most moralistic philosopher that ever was, [as] Hobbes would put it—said that the problem of the right order of civil society cannot be served without a previous solution of the problem of international order. I do not quote literally because I simply do not remember the exact wording, but that is the gist of it. President Wilson wanted to make the world safe for democracy. He had a very solid theoretical backing, at least to the extent to which Kant's philosophy supplies this solid backing. Today you see [that] in all practical discussions, when you scratch the surface you come then to those people who say you cannot possibly have the right kind of order if there is not somehow the problem of external security solved—not in a merely fundamentally defensive fashion, protecting our part of the world, but having some sort of world government, call it [the] United Nations or what you will. "Of course we must defend our things, but let others stew in their own juice if [they] want it differently," say others. Do I make myself clear? Do you recognize the present-day issue in that point?

Well, the ancient view, the classical view, is just at the opposite pole. But Thucydides's view, however, is not simply identical with the view of these moderate men, as we may be able to make clear later. The speaker has emphasized this point, that Demosthenes's action shows that he has learned from his bad experiences in central Greece that he had the year before, as is indicated in chapter 30.

Student: He also learned from the barbarians, the way they attacked him while he was fighting—you know to run, and run away—

LS: But still. that was not however necessarily the difference between Greeks and barbarians but between heavy-armed and light-armed in a certain territory, and under certain conditions the light-armed—there is the story of the British army in the American War of Independence, [which] of course repeated it. The solid phalanx, so to speak, and the individual man, each behind his own tree, shooting—and that can have quite great advantages. And in chapters 33 to 34—but this cannot come out in a translation—where Thucydides speaks frequently, at least three times, of the men in the sense of human beings, the Spartans, and does no longer call them *hombres*. You know, they were reduced to such a position where they could no longer be *hombres*, and I think the beauty of the usage is illustrated in this point.

In chapter 38 he describes—there he takes up again the term *andres* about the Spartans and they are completely licked, these three hundred men, and they ask the Spartans on the mainland what they should do, what they may do. And they are permitted to think only of themselves, i.e., they are permitted to surrender. How do you interpret that, that they ask first before they make the decision? They do not make it on their own.

Student: Isn't this part of the Spartan discipline?

LS: That is the way in which I interpret it. And of course for reasons of state the authorities decide they need these men and cannot sacrifice them, and therefore they may surrender. That is the way I understood it too.

Student: There is a thing here to this effect, regarding the change from *andres* to the other. At one point somewhere the Messenians, or someone else, they actually say: My, the Spartans aren't all they are cracked up to be."Where is that—

LS: Yes, we come to that, we come to that in chapter 40.

Same Student: They suddenly realize they are only "men" after all.

LS: Chapter 40, let us read that. "This happened contrary to the opinions of all the Greeks." Do you have that, chapter 40?

Reader:
Of all the accidents of this war, this same fell out the most contrary to the opinion of the Grecians. For they expected that the Lacedaemonians should never, neither by famine nor whatsoever other necessity, have been constrained to deliver up their arms, but have died with them in their hands, fighting as long as they had been able—

LS: You know, "Either with your shield or on your shield"—the Spartan philosophy meaning no surrender.

Reader:
and would not believe that those that yielded were like to those that were slain. And when one afterwards of the Athenian confederates asked one of the prisoners, by way of insulting, if they which were slain were valiant men, he answered that a spindle (meaning an arrow) deserved to be valued at a high rate if it could know what was a good man, signifying that the slain were such as the stones and arrows chanced to light on. [xvii]

LS: That is, I must say, a great compliment to Athens—that is not an Athenian who is so mean [as] to ask this question, but only one of the allies. That is the way in which I understand it. But one must also say that the Spartan gives a very good answer, that the arrow—and he compares it with a female tool in spinning, the spindle,[5] i.e., a female instrument—should be able to discern the brave men from the cowards. In other words, it was an accident who was killed and who survived. But I think it is more the compliment to Athens that it was not an Athenian who had the meanness to ask this question.

Same Student: The bit that I was wanting is in 34, where they suddenly realize that the Spartans are only men after all. It is brought out quite strongly.

LS: Will you read it, the passage which you have in mind?

[xvii] Thucydides 4.40.

Same Student: "But when the Lacedaemonians were no longer able to run out after them where they charged, these light-armed soldiers, seeing them less in[xviii] earnest in chasing them and taking courage chiefly from their sight, as being many times their number, and having also been used to them so much as not to think them now so dangerous as they had done, for that they had not been received so much hurt at their hands as their subdued minds, because they were to fight against the Lacedaemonians, had at their first landing prejudged, contemned them—"[xix]

LS: Shortly thereafter, the term *anthrōpoi* instead of *andres*, meaning just ordinary human beings, not hombres, is used to reinforce that.

Same Student: You don't think there could be further irony in that business about the arrow and the spindle—in that it is in some sense against something feminine that a true man is known?

LS: I believe I understand what you mean . . .

Same Student: Maybe the Spartan answer is not so smart.

LS: Yes, but I don't believe that the emphasis—you know, the Greek word for courage, *andreia*, literally translated means "manliness." But this [is] never, as far as I know, in fact the meaning of this kind of virility which you have in mind, but it is of course sometime implied. Because then you confused it with the word for male, [*arsēn*] and not—

Same Student: Not necessarily virility—isn't there a Greek saying, "Man is the master of all the world [. . .] and woman rules man [. . .]"?

LS: I don't remember, but the thought makes some sense. That could be, I do not know. It did not suggest itself to me. On the contrary, I thought it meant being shot by an arrow, and being the victim of an arrow cannot be a test of manliness because that can be a matter of accident.

Same Student: Yes, but they should all get shot . . .

LS: That is another matter, and that is a bigger question. Why did the Spartans collapse and did not think it was better to fight it out till the end? Of course it wouldn't have helped them, because without any sacrifice of life on the part of the Messenians all the others would have been killed from far away—you know, they had occupied the higher positions. It would have been a sheer display of courage without any political use. Now let us go on. In chapter 41 there is near the beginning, say, the second sentence from the beginning, do you have that? Where it speaks of the Messenians from Naupactus?

Reader:

[xviii] Hobbes's translation reads "less earnest."
[xix] Thucydides 4.34.

And the Messenians of Naupactus, having sent thither such men of their own as were fittest for the purpose, as to their native country (for Pylos is in that country which belonged once to the Messenians), infested Laconia with robbers and did them much other mischief, as being of the same language.[xx]

LS: Now this is the literal repetition of a remark made in chapter 3 of the same book, and I don't believe that this is merely an act of carelessness on the part of Thucydides, that he repeats himself literally without any meaning. I believe he wishes to emphasize the complicated relations of the Spartans to the Messenians, because after all the moral issue in the Peloponnesian War was from the Spartan side a war of liberation against the tyrant city of Athens. And now this reminder that there was also cause for liberating people in the other camp, the Messenians, is I think a point which is very meaningful.

Then there come a few other stories apparently just accidental, but in this case I believe I can discern a certain meaning in these particular stories. First we have the story in chapters 42 to 44 where Nicias is the commander. Now in order to understand that, let us look at the end of chapter 44. The Athenians withdraw, withdraw to their ships—do you have that? "When the Athenians saw that all came against them."

Reader:
The Athenians, when all these were coming upon them together, imagining them to have been the succours of the neighboring cities of Peloponnesus, retired speedily to their galleys, carrying with them the booty and the bodies of their dead, all save two, which, not finding, they left. Being aboard, they crossed over to the islands on the other side, and from thence sent a herald and fetched away those two dead bodies which they left behind. There were slain in the battle Corinthians, two hundred and twelve, and Athenians, somewhat under fifty.[xxi]

LS: Yes, now but what does this mean: the Athenians win, have practically won, but then they admit defeat? It means always to admit defeat if you ask for the dead, that is part of the story; but what does it mean that when two corpses were left and that induces them to admit defeat? What does this action bespeak?

Student: Piety.

LS: Piety. Nicias is the commander. In this particular case we have a confirmation from Plutarch's *Nicias*, chapter 6, where this particular event is mentioned as a sign of Nicias's outstanding piety, that he preferred to forgo the claim to victory rather than leave two corpses unburied.

Student: And yet there is a remark, I believe, in book 7 where Thucydides refers to Nicias's superstitious piety.

LS: Yes, but that has to do with that.

[xx] Thucydides 4.41.
[xxi] Thucydides 4.44.

Same Student: He wouldn't take the troops out of Sicily because of the eclipse of the sun.

LS: We will come to this question later, but the most famous event, of course, is the battle of the Arginusae, 405, a story no longer told by Thucydides but by Xenophon.[xxii] There was a naval battle which the Athenians won, but then there were, according to Xenophon's description, shipwrecked soldiers who were not saved by the generals. And therefore the generals were accused and they were all condemned to death. The only one protesting against the illegal procedure—because you could not condemn nine generals in a block, you could only do it one at a time, that was against the law, and Socrates was the only one who protested. That was the only political act of Socrates. And now, but the point [is]: Was it was not shipwrecked soldiers? It was corpses. Xenophon plays that down, and the reason is they had to be buried in Attic soil; at least they have to be buried, but preferably on Attic soil. In other words, the actions against the generals, that was also on the grounds of impiety.

Student: This is not so much superstition as the action in book 7.

LS: That is difficult to say; the line between religion and superstition, or piety and superstition—you have to find out what Thucydides himself thought. You cannot draw it by saying that religion is what Athenian law recognized as proper, and superstition is what Nicias added of his own. That is not the line to draw, but if you want to make the distinction you have to follow Thucydides's indications. We will trace that out later. But here he makes at any rate quite a major point—two corpses, he emphasizes that—that is Nicias's piety. Now in the next chapter, in 45, we find another very strange thing which doesn't come out in the translation, I am sure. There he speaks of what the Athenians did on Corinthian territory, and he uses here the word in Greek, [*elēisteuon*]: "they acted as robbers." He doesn't say what he ordinarily says, [that] they devastated the country and this kind of thing. He uses this term referring to robbing. In the case of seafaring men, it would be piracy. I think what he wants to bring out here is this: it is a story of Athenians acting as robbers, i.e., a term which occurs very rarely outside of the Archaeology—you know, the first twenty-three chapters. A reversal to old ways of life—you know, when he says in the early time robbery was not regarded as a criminal action, but even as noble. Do you remember that? Here this is the story of Athenian robbery, a return to the old times.

In chapter 46 to 48 we have an abominable story of Athenians' complicity in mass butchery in Corcyra, the story mentioned before in another context and now repeated. There is a little story in 47, just mentioned in passing only, and yet I believe it is of great importance because it throws light on book 2, chapter 65, the chapter on the difference between Periclean and post-Periclean Athens. I think you should just begin to read at the beginning of chapter 47.

Reader:

[xxii] Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.6.29-38, 7.1-35.

When they were persuaded to do so and that a boat was treacherously prepared, as they rowed away they were they were taken; and the truce being now broken, were all given up into the hands of the Corcyraeans. It did much further this plot, that to make the pretext seem more serious and the agents in it less fearful, the Athenian generals gave out that they were nothing pleased that the men should be carried home by others whilst they themselves were to go into Sicily, and the honour of it be ascribed to those that should convoy them.[xxiii]

LS: You know, some oligarchs, some leading men in Corcyra, were taken prisoner. They were supposed to be brought to Athens, and then the Athenian generals say: Well, since they had to move to Sicily and others would take them to Athens and the honor [that][6] would accrue to the commanders bringing these prisoners to Athens, they had no interest in their being brought to Athens. And then they permitted the domestic enemies in Corcyra to slit these people's throats. This is, I think, a minor, but interesting example of Athenian generals being concerned with their private benefit to the detriment of Athenian reputation. The much greater case, of course, is the case of Demosthenes, which we have seen last time, who rightly feared for his safety after his defeat in Locris. In other words, what happened after Pericles was a cleavage between the self-interest of the generals and Athenian interest. In Pericles there was identity, because Pericles had set all his interest in the glory of Athens. That was his glory.

Now then there is the story told of Nicias's conquest of Cythera, an island southeast of the Peloponnesus, and again there is a tremendous effect on the Spartans, because he comes on[7] top of Sphacteria. Let's see in chapter 55. And there is a fantastic story in chapter 56. The men from Aegina were settled by the Spartans on Laconic soil—islanders, Spartan-loving islanders who were settled on Spartan soil inland. And even these Spartan-loving islanders were not safe in the very heart of Laconia, so great was the power of Athens at this moment. Nicias, the pious and gentle Nicias, treats the Cythereans very mildly and in entire contrast to the way in which the Spartans treated the Plataeans. There is also a story of a butchery of the Aeginetans, but for which Nicias of course was not responsible.

Now after these stories of Athenian successes on Greek islands—Sphacteria and Cythera being the greatest examples—Thucydides turns, one could say naturally, to the Athenians on the big island, Sicily, in chapters 58 to 65. And the main content of the section is a speech of Hermocrates to the assembly of the Sicilians at Gela on Sicily, chapters 59 to 64. I think the Periclean character of this speech, which the speaker noted, I would say is limited to one deep important point: the amazing foresight of Hermocrates, just as Pericles had an amazing foresight. I believe that is the main point. Now let us first look at this speech.

The fact that war is an evil, Hermocrates says, does not prevent people from engaging in war. Hermocrates will only say that a war among the Sicilians now is most inopportune. There is need for the unity of the whole of Sicily against Athens. Sicily for the Sicilians is the only alternative to Athenian conquest. Three times Hermocrates says, "if we are

[xxiii] Thucydides 4.47.

reasonable men"—derivative from *sōphrosynē*. He was of course a member of the oligarchic aristocratic party, and he is well-known to Plato fans, if I may use this term, because Plato quasi-promised a dialogue *Hermocrates*, which he did not write. You know there is the *Timaeus*—the *Republic*, followed by the *Timaeus*, followed by the *Critias*, and then there is a fourth person there, Hermocrates, who should also say something, but this dialogue was never written. Perhaps there was no matter with which Hermocrates [had] to deal—it is hard to say what the reason was—but he plays a very great role in Thucydides.

Naturally Hermocrates, too, as I think most of the speakers do in Thucydides, contradicts himself. He says, on the one hand, the Athenians attack even if they are not called on by a Sicilian city, and on the other hand, he suggests that the Athenians attack only if some Sicilian city calls them in. Now what does that mean? In the first place, the Athenians attack even if no Sicilian city calls them in; then this means of course that Sicilian unity is not enough for disposing of the Athenian danger. And that would mean, if you think it through, that the Sicilians must seek an alliance with Athens' enemies in Greece proper. But such an alliance would open the racial antagonism between the two Greek races, the Dorians, of which the Spartans were the leader, and the Ionians, of which the Athenians were the leader. This is the one contradiction which comes out in other places.

He makes clear that the Sicilians are one. He disregards, by the way, also the question of the Sicel part of Sicily and of the non-Greek races of Sicily altogether. But he says the Sicilians are one by calculation of interest and name—they are all Sicilians. They are not one by race. That is already an indication of the problem of Sicily. Sicily is not a true unit, and therefore the possibility of Athens finding entering wedges there is guaranteed. I think one could say that the Sicilian expedition could be deduced from Hermocrates's speech alone—I mean not only from his apprehensions, but from the fact that he must admit, you know, the essential disunity within Sicily. Let me see whether this comes out in any particular passage. Read for example the beginning of chapter 60.

Reader:
Nevertheless you must know that this assembly, if we be wise, ought not to be only for the commodity of the cities in particular, but how to preserve Sicily in general,

LS: The whole of Sicily.

Reader:
now sought to be subdued (at least in my opinion) by the Athenians. And you ought to think, that the Athenians are more urgent persuaders of the peace than any words of mine; who, having of all the Grecians the greatest power, lie here with a few galleys to observe our errors, and by a lawful title of alliance, handsomely to accommodate their natural hostility to their best advantage.[xxiv]

LS: And with the legal, lawful name of alliance—now both terms, "name" and "law," *nomos*, convention, both point to the convention, because names are also merely imposed

[xxiv] Thucydides 4.60.

and merely by convention. I mean, the Athenian friendship for Sicily or any of the Sicilians is merely conventional; by nature they are the enemies of Sicily. He uses also in other places the distinction between nature and convention. And in his discussion he shows in fact that's a contradiction, that there is no such natural unity among the Sicilians, and therefore the possibility of Athenian conquest exists genuinely. Now on the basis of this distinction between nature and convention as he accepts and interprets it, he makes an assertion which is quite extraordinary in the second half of chapter 61. Will you read that please?

Reader:
Indeed, the Athenians, that covet and meditate these things, are to be pardoned. I blame not those that are willing to reign, but those that are most willing to be subject; for it is the nature of man everywhere to command such as give away and to be shy of such as assail.

LS: Look! Is that not amazing: this enemy of Athens admits the Athenian principle of what some people today would simply call imperialism. We must draw merely one conclusion. Among the Sicilian cities by far the greatest was Hermocrates's own, Syracuse. If this is human nature, what is good[8] [for] the goose, Athens, must be good for the gander, Syracuse. So the only alternative you have to Athenian imperialism would be Syracusian imperialism. Why should the other Sicilians not prefer a rather far away imperial power to the imperial power at their front door, or back door? I mean, that is another amazing contradiction which Hermocrates commits.

But this leads to a larger issue which we have discussed on a former occasion and which I believe cannot be emphasized too strongly. The principle stated for the first time in the Athenian speech in Sparta, in the first book, that this is a fundamental fact of political life—the right of the stronger, at least of the stronger city, disregarding the question now of the individual—is never questioned, except in the dialogue with the Melians. I mean, maybe it is questioned elsewhere, but we have not yet come across it. And you remember the extraordinary thing, the Athenians say this in Sparta, where everyone accuses them of radical injustice. And later on, that Spartan ephor who is absolutely anti-Athenian does not even say: Well, they have admitted that they are not only accidentally unjust, but unjust as a matter of principle. No one questions this; only the Melians, and the Melians are the people who have no other means of defense except to deny the principle. They have no weapons, no allies near at hand, and so on.

Student: Isn't that typical of small nations? Isn't it the small nations that bring up the jargon about international morality?

LS: But you would only say that Thucydides is correct. But of course we have to wonder if that is Thucydides's last word on the question. But that it is in a way his first word cannot be denied. I mean, there is massive evidence in favor of that end, and of course he would have to make this great distinction, I believe, that granted the natural right of the stronger cannot be circumvented in any way, there is a very great difference between how you exercise that right once you have your empire. In other words, you can be generous,

or not cruel, or you can be cruel and callous. And the Athenians claim for themselves—at least the right kind of Athenian; not Cleon, Pericles and such people—that they exercise the imperial rule as mildly as possible. In other words, no repressive action which is not really indispensable. Others simply don't care, you know, like Alcidas, the Spartan commander who kills off all prisoners because they are in the way.[xxv] This I think one would surely have to add: Thucydides was very much concerned with the difference between a decent and an indecent imperialism. But that would not contradict the principle that whoever can, will acquire empire or is forced to acquire empire. You can also put it this way, you know, as the argument has frequently been stated [that] you get vacuums, power vacuums: if you don't move in, your enemies will. What choice do you have? You have to move in then yourself. And it doesn't make such a difference in the end who moved in first, you know, because since you know the other man will move in why do you wait? [. . .] Move in at the first occasion yourself. That is something which Thucydides surely means.

Student: Yet in the next paragraph Hermocrates says that all men confess peace to be the best thing.

LS: Where is that?

Same Student: In the translation, the second line of paragraph 62.

LS: Yes, but here he is taking that up more clearly in chapter 59. We can read that; will you begin to read chapter 59?

Reader:
Men of Sicily, I am neither of the least city nor of the most afflicted with war that am now to speak and to deliver the opinion which I take to conduce most to the common benefit of all Sicily. Touching war, how calamitous a thing it is, to what end should a man, particularising the evils thereof, make a long speech before men that already know it?

LS: You see, that is clear there. How does he go on to say?

Reader:
For neither doth the not knowing of them necessitate any man to enter into war, nor the fear of them divert any man from it, when he thinks it will turn to his advantage.[xxvi]

LS: Yes, but that is it. What does he mean, somewhat baroquely expressed? What does he say? The knowledge that war is an evil is universally available, but this knowledge is of no use. All men know that war is an evil, and yet they engage in war. So it is surely not due to ignorance of this verity that war is an evil that men wage war. Where does the fear come in? Now they know that war is an evil. Knowledge of an evil in the future is almost identical with fear. Now at any rate, the fear of war which follows from the knowledge

[xxv] Thucydides 3.32.
[xxvi] Thucydides 4.59.

that war is evil is not sufficient to keep men from war, because there may be some good to be obtained by war which is more attractive than the evil which war has. Is this a sufficient answer to your question?

Same Student: I think so, except that he seemed to state it in 62 somewhat more absolutely, that war is an evil: "But when peace is confessed by all men to be the best of things"—if that were the case then no good would—

LS: But obviously when you read the speech as a whole, it is not a speech simply in favor of peace, it is a speech in favor of intra-Sicilian peace. That is a more limited proposition. For example, I can easily see that Khrushchev and Mao might agree under certain conditions that Russian–Chinese peace is irrevocably good without necessarily agreeing that war or peace is simply good. That is simple.

So if we are practically compelled, at least up to this point, to say that Thucydides accepted the principle that in relations among cities the right of the stronger is simply inevitable. And then of course it depends very much what you do on that basis. You can behave like a pig, or you can behave like a tolerably decent city; that does make an enormous practical difference. In other words, differently stated, if Athens behaves better as an imperial power than the Persians do, this is not due to the fact that any power or any state has obligations to other societies, but—if I may put it this way—[that] it has obligations to itself. If these are decent men, there are things to which they would not stoop because it would be degrading to them. It is not the point of view of obligations to others, but of self-respect toward oneself—pride, you could say. That I think one has to take into serious consideration, [that] that is what Thucydides meant. That would mean that the question of justice, of justice as obligations to others, is for Thucydides not the fundamental and primary problem, but, if we may take the distinctions to indicate the beginnings of the first two speeches, the distinction between justice and necessity. Necessity is the basic thing, and then on the basis justice can come in in one way or the other.

There is however, or seems to be, a principle of justice mentioned by Thucydides, although not clearly by this name. And that is indicated by what he says in chapters 8 to 9 of the second book, the famous: What is the war about? Liberation of the Greeks from the tyrant city. The implication is that every Greek city, large or small, or every tribe, large or small, strong or weak, has a right to its independence. Well, we are of course familiar with that doctrine. In modern times it takes on the form of the right of sovereignty possessed equally by all states. That was not the Greek [view]; they limited it to Greek cities, in the first place, and there is no Greek notion of sovereignty in the modern sense. Now here you have a principle of justice which can be stated: all cities are equal. Cities are equal from the point of view of justice, not from the point of view of power, of course. That is the formula on which the war was waged by the Spartans: dishonestly, hypocritically, but very effectively, as Brasidas shows later on in the fourth book.

Now the strange thing is that this big issue is not mentioned at all in the first book, where he presents the fundamental issue. And in the first book there are three causes of the war

mentioned—causes of the war also in the sense of [the] end for which the war is fought, not merely efficient causes. Now the first cause I think is sufficiently stated as Sparta's fear of Athens. But this must be properly understood, fear being the most justifiable motive, as we have seen. I mean, if you have fear, you are much more justified than if you desire to have more, either more profit or more honor and glory; that doesn't make any difference. Now this Spartan fear of Athens corresponds to the Athenian principle of right of the stronger. The other strong fellow who is threatened by this rival getting stronger and stronger acts according to the principle of the right of the stronger and tries to bring him down.

The second cause of the war is breach of the treaty. Here you have a principle of justice: what the just means here is the legal, that which you have agreed upon you must keep. And it is very interesting that when the issue is discussed in these terms in Sparta in the famous debate when the four speeches occur—[those of] the Corinthians, the Athenians, the Spartan king, and the Spartan ephor—the Corinthians and the Athenians refer to the gods who watch over the oaths: *hoi theoi orkioi.* So in other words, there is a connection between the principle [that] the just is the legal, the just is what you have agreed upon, and the divine sanction. Although there is no strong emphasis, there is a connection, because there is a difference between a mere agreement and a solemn agreement. We have seen that in Plataea when the Plataeans killed the one hundred eighty prisoners, you remember, and that they had promised to keep them alive, that didn't make any difference: did they swear to it or not, that was the issue. Only under that condition was it a solemn promise.

And this leads to the third cause, which is called by Thucydides, ironically, the greatest cause, *megistē prophasis*, and that has to do with that sacred law. Do you remember that? T*a agē*, the curses based on the breach of the sacred law. Now this cause is treated by Thucydides with utter contempt: no one believed that; that was just propaganda, as they say today. And this kind of thing is a right, indeed a right, not a matter of mere expediency, but a right which has no connection whatever to the expedient. It has nothing to do with expediency, whereas the principle of keeping contracts has something to with expediency. Now, as I said, the Spartan war formula, liberation of the Greeks from the tyrant city, is not even mentioned in the first book, and that is very strange.

One reason surely is the entirely hypocritical character of this point, for we have seen not only Sparta and Messenians, who should also be liberated if you want to have liberation, self-determination of nations, it is now called,[9] [but] the Thebans and the Plataeans. The Plataeans had as much right to choose their own allies as anyone else had, and they choose the Athenians as their allies. I think Thucydides wanted to keep this question of that principle of justice—which we may call the equal right of each Greek city to its independence—he wanted to keep this separate, an issue to be considered by itself, and therefore he does not bring it in book 1 but only in book 2, and in the context where the entirely hypocritical character of this issue becomes clear because it is inserted into the account of the Theban breach of the peace—you know, the flagrant breach of peace, you remember that, I don't have to recount it. Why did he do that? I believe there is the following reason: the question of justice as stated in book 1, where justice means keeping

promises, keeping solemn contracts, there is a link up with the problem of the gods. There is no such link-up in the question of the equality of all Greek cities.

Now what does this mean? It is a purely political issue. The question of the breach of contract is a political issue which transcends politics, because it is bound up with oath-watching gods. But the question of the equal freedom of all Greek cities does not have this direct connection. It is strictly [a] political issue. In the question, and a very grave question, concerning—I will now use modern terminology—the possible sovereignty of many cities, you know, you have Athens, you have Megara, you have not only Athens and Sparta and Corinth and such big things, but also Megara and Plataea and the small islands all around. And what Thucydides suggests here, I believe—and that comes out in the Spartan speech in Athens after Pylos [. . .] Either one hegemonial city, imperial city—say, Athens, because the Athenians try to get, according to a rather authentic interpretation of what the Athenians were after—rather authentic because Alcibiades states it later and Alcibiades was the characteristic Athenian. Or, the alternative: two imperial cities, the land power Sparta, and the sea power Athens working together like Austria and Prussia in the example I gave before.

Now [10]I believe we are not yet in a position to decide whether Thucydides thought that this dream of an Athenian–Spartan joint control of Greece, the dream of the moderate men, of men like Aristophanes, for example: Let Athens and Sparta work together and save Greece from the barbarian, and all this kind of thing—[11][whether] Thucydides might have regarded this as a possibility. I regard this as a very grave point, that he regarded this as a possibility, because of [the] denial which it implies. The many sovereign cities is not a viable possibility. But of course legally it could be true, but it would not be a political verity. It seems to me that here we may find the first clear inkling of what the basic difference is between Thucydides on the one hand and Plato and Aristotle on the other. The Platonic–Aristotelian scheme on any level—I mean, whether you take the supreme level of Plato's *Republic* or the very sober level, say, of the fourth book of Aristotle's *Politics*—presupposes the viability of many sovereign states. If we try to state the Platonic–Aristotelian argument: Man is a social and political animal, so he will, if not prevented by accident, he will move—at least the best kind of man, man living in the moderate temperate zone and not in Greenland and central Africa; there is no civilization possible there according to the ancients. It is not entirely refuted, by the way, and surely not refuted by the fact that our anthropologists speak of the culture of the Eskimos and the culture of central Africa because they have very modest views of what constitutes a culture. But at any rate, you can have civilized human life only under certain climatic, geographic conditions: moderate, temperate, and so on. But then [12]men will naturally form societies which will grow into the *polis*; and these societies, in order to fulfill their function, must be of a limited size. They cannot be Babylons where you don't know whether the city is conquered—[if] the enemy comes in in the south part and you live in the northern suburb, you don't know; that is not a city. And of course our cities are super-Babylons from this point of view.

So the city will be of a limited size, and therefore there will be of necessity a large number of fairly small societies. I mean, they don't have to be cities with three hundred

hoplites, you can have five hundred, two thousand, but it will be . . . . This Plato and Aristotle demand, and one can say that is the concrete political meaning of what they understand by justice, because justice means an ordering of human relations and human living together, and there is an optimal form which it might take: that is the *polis*, the *polis* as described. And Thucydides, I don't believe—one mustn't come to this speculation of philosophers of history that the Greek *polis* worked for some time and then it was no longer workable because Alexander came and Philip of Macedonia, and this kind of thing. What Thucydides has in mind is that this is never feasible, and not only for a short time. Never feasible: there was always some hegemony, some practical denial of the sovereignty of all. I believe that is a crucial point. The fundamental necessity affects the kind of justice leading to the *polis*. I believe that is a major point in Thucydides and which of course appears to us in a way more immediately, perhaps, because we have the elaborate doctrines of Plato and Aristotle in front of us. In a way they are more accessible to us than Thucydides because of the theoretical character of the doctrine, you know, whereas here no doctrine is stated. A story is told and we have to find out what the fable teaches. This, I suggest on the basis of our present reading up to this point, should be considered.

Student: It seems to me in looking at this, this is just the way this speech of Hermocrates struck me, it is analogous with Pericles. There is something [. . .] and the very last chapter of it reads very nicely as a Thucydidean comment on the futility of the present war between Athens and Sparta dividing the Greek world.

LS: The last sentence of Hermocrates?

Same Student: The last paragraph, really, the last chapter of Hermocrates's speech.

LS: Yes, but is this not the point? I was struck most by the fact that he speaks of a unity of Sicily and says then unity of Sicily, one name for all the Sicilians. And then he says if we are prudent we will drive off all commerce from other races—as if they were racially homogeneous, and a part of Sicily was of course racially homogeneous with Athens, and the other was racially homogeneous with Sparta.

Same Student: I was thinking of this in the same way. Hellas is a unit, and there are Ionians and Dorians within that which are at the others' throats, but they shouldn't be when there are Macedonians and Thracians and Persians and things all around them. It is very closely connected with what you have just been saying about the sort of inadequacy of the *polis*, the local *polis*, just to survive itself, some kind of a vision that the thing was hopeless and that there was some larger unit.

LS: Let me see. The precise parallel would be this: Hermocrates's suggestion of a pan-Sicilian policy would correspond to "X's" policy of a pan-Hellenic policy. But that is not Pericles's policy. I mean, if I may take my German example, Pericles would correspond to Bismarck, who throws off the yoke. You know, the two powers cannot live in the same political society. In other words, Pericles had a small Greece, a little Greece, and the pan-Greek solution was the one dreamt of by the nice gentlemen who lived in the recollection

of the Spartan–Athenian co-operation against the Medes in the Persian War. That was not Pericles's notion.

Same Student: That is much closer to Nicias, for instance—

LS: Nicias, that is quite possibly true, because Nicias has not the Periclean notion.

Same Student: But the general idea in relation to the argument which you were putting forward there about the fact the polis couldn't survive, the fact that Thucydides might have been feeling out the possibility of Greece having to come together—

LS: I believe he would have said that it never truly existed in the moment Greece had to act politically. In other words, even in the Persian War it was fundamentally an action of Athens alone or Spartans. By the way, regarding the theoretical question, I must not forget that this issue of the nonviability of the *polis* on grounds of its smallness, its military insufficiency, is not discussed to my recollection in classical literature on these terms. I mean, I wouldn't call this a discussion, what we discern by looking into a deeper stratum of Thucydides is not an explicit discussion of that issue.

I would like here any corrections to what I have said, but let me only mention what strikes me most from later[13] reading. There is a very important document[14] regarding this question, based on classical thought but definitely post-classical chronologically, and that is Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*.[xxvii] Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* appears as a famous communistic book. I am sure one can show that this is pure eyewash, the communist issue; that is a red herring, if I may use this politically well-known expression. The issue is primarily that *Utopia* is primarily an anti-monarchical book, not against private property [but] republican—republican meant not certainly in the present American sense of the word, you know, the Republican Party versus the Democratic Party. And everyone can see that the island of Utopia is England: there is a river like the Thames, and a capital like London, and everything has only a fantastic name. What is the difference? There is no king there, no Henry VIII [or][15] any other of the same character. But it is really a federative republic. These are *poleis*; whatever the cities may have been, London and Leicester and other places, they are *poleis*, federated *poleis*. In other words, the federative republic is the solution to the problem of the military defects of the *polis*. But this question is [not] explicitly discussed, because in Sir Thomas More you get it only by comparing utopia with Britain at the time, which is easy to do but is . . . and that is Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*. Is it book 10, if I remember well, where he brings in the problem of federation? In either book 9 or book 10.[xxviii] He speaks of the inadequacy of republics from the point of view of national defense. The solution: federation. And then he sketches what kind of a loose or strict federation, and then he suggests this very strict federation, the Lycian federation greatly admired by Hamilton and the Federalists but not acceptable to his countrymen at the time, nor to many countrymen in our time.

[xxvii] Published in 1516.

[xxviii] It is book 9, and Montesquieu's praise of the Lycian confederation is to be found in chapter 3.

You know, the people who didn't care for smaller societies, for cities, and were perfectly satisfied with these larger territorial states like France or Germany and so on, I disregard them; I am interested only in those who said the ancients were right in wanting to have fairly small societies, that the political unit is the *polis*. And you know from the *Federalist Papers* that this is an issue: by all means let us have small states, but how can we combine that with the requirements of defense? Answer: federation. The problem there as stated in these documents is a classical problem, going back to classical antiquity.

Same Student: I was just wondering if you think Thucydides would have denied that the *polis* of Plato and Aristotle was the regime which he would wish.

LS: Well, that all depends. I mean, when you get the descriptions in Plato and Aristotle, [it is] what I call the shining temple. There is no squalor and nothing sordid and unpleasant and unsavory around. But that is due, of course, to a deliberate abstraction on the part of Plato and Aristotle, namely,[16] [from] how these things move not only in everyday life but in a state of motion, i.e., in war. But that this is a legitimate demand from Plato and Aristotle to tell us that too—Plato admits at the beginning of the *Timaeus* when he says, "After we have seen this beautiful temple of the *Republic*, now let us see [it] in motion," i.e., in war, that is an admission on Plato's part that what Thucydides is doing, describing the *polis* in war and with all the implications of that, is an absolutely necessary supplement to what Plato and Aristotle do.

Now what Thucydides says, however, is all right. And by the way, regarding the regime, that is not so far away. What is that mixture of democracy and oligarchy recommended by Thucydides in the eighth book, when he says that Athens had the best policy in his lifetime in 411? It lasted only a few months, but it was a mixture of democracy and oligarchy. And what does Aristotle say? I mean, of course Aristotle would call it aristocracy, but if you break it down and as it is feasible, it is not so much rougher, and Plato in the *Laws* [says] the same thing. That is not the fundamental difference; some minor difference might be there, but the fundamental difference comes up when Thucydides says, as it were, if you think that through, the question of the city in motion, of how it can hold its own, confronted, say, by the barbarian threat—also of course with the disagreement among the Greek cities, because not all Greek cities will at the same time have rule of gentlemen: I mean, what guarantee is there? So if you have an ambitious democracy directed by guys like Cleon and very decent gentlemanly-controlled small cities all around, what should they do? That is a very urgent question. They must have at least alliances, and alliances are notoriously weak, you know, temporary alliances, and you have to do something else. And I believe such harsh things as Thucydides brings out, and as his translator Hobbes has stated with theoretical brutality, protection requires obedience. Say, the somewhat stronger city protects the weaker ones, that means that the weaker ones have to obey the guidance of the stronger ones. In other words, it is a relation of dependence which needn't appear in legal documents where they are all equal allies, but in fact it will be so.

I am sure that Plato and Aristotle were not blind to these kinds of things, but they surely did not elaborate them in the way in which Thucydides elaborates them. And that is what Plato indicates in that passage of the *Laws* when he says practically all legislation, which includes also the establishment of the regimes, is done by *tychē*, by chance.

Student: Is that in the tenth book?

LS: Not in the tenth book; I believe in book 4 or so.[xxix] All legislation practically comes by *tychē*, meaning without planning. And this planning is of course the premise of what Plato and Aristotle do all the time—how to establish a *politeia*, how to erect the constitutional structure. Thucydides would say you have no opportunity to erect so much. Most of the time most of these things are forced upon you, and also the changes which you make. Plato and Aristotle would say against that, [that] that is true in fact, but since human presence and human ordering has some possibilities from time to time—otherwise the whole idea of [the] political would be nonsense. In other words, since you have to choose from time to time, and of course suppose you choose the better, then you have to know the good, otherwise you are blind in your choice. Then you have to have a complete picture of what the good, the politically good, the good society is. And Plato and Aristotle say: Here we tell you. And I believe they would say this—I believe Thucydides would not have denied it, but if he did, Plato would say: Well, what you imply when you make this statement that Athens had its best political order at this particular moment in 411, we've tried to elaborate that with all its implications, and that you cannot regard as an impossible thing but as a necessary thing, because you presuppose it. And from this basis[17] an understanding between these two entirely different beginnings of Thucydides on the one hand and Aristotle on the other is possible.

Student: [. . .]

LS: I think he meant Asia Minor.

Same Student: But the Greeks are more intelligent than the rest . . . but they could band together into a confederation, and I think he says that they could rule the world, or something like that.[xxx]

LS: Something like that.

Same Student: Doesn't he bring up the discussion of courage also—

LS: Yes, that is true, that is the only clear passage in the *Politics* where he speaks of it. But it is also true—

Same Student: Is he looking further than Thucydides here? Is that what he's doing?

LS: Yes, but how would it work in practice? He doesn't answer that question, you know.

[xxix] *Laws* 708a-709b.

[xxx] The reference is to Aristotle's *Politics* 1327b19-32.

The structure of the federation, whether the federation will have two foci, Athens and Sparta, or whether it will be a federation with simple equality of the various cities, or if there will be one hegemonial city. He doesn't say a word about that.

Same Student: But did Aristotle regard this as a desirable thing [. . .]

LS: He only says it in order to show how superior this Greek mixture is to . . . He doesn't say it is in itself desirable. He does not say that. He only says that this mixture of intelligence with courage is by far superior to intelligence by itself and courage by itself. And in order to show how superior that is, he says [that] if all these people who have this mixture of intelligence and courage in the proper way, if they would work together they could rule the whole world. He doesn't say that this is desirable, or still less does he make any suggestions as to the particular form and manner of this working together.

Same Student: Could you tell me where this occurs [. . .]

LS: It is in the seventh book, probably, where he speaks of the nature required for political survival.

Student: Thucydides brings up this question himself when he intimates several times that Athens has extra-Hellenic imperial aspirations—the expedition into Egypt in the archaeology and in Pericles's second speech. And this would seem to be an argument against a federation or a diarchy in Greece.

LS: No, no. The Periclean vision was clearly a vision of Athenian imperialism. I mean, extending perhaps to Sicily, Carthage, and God knows where, maybe Rome; but it was Athens, not Greece.

Same Student: But he suggests that the imperialism is unlimited in its nature.

LS: Sure. Oh yes, that is true. And what the other people wanted, the nice people, the moderate people—Nicias, as you like to say—was limited. Let the Greeks led by Sparta and Athens in harmony hold their own against the Mede and conquer some barbaric country which is useful for settlement—of course they were not squeamish about that—but not unlimited goals. That I think is the point. Now there is something which is relevant to what you said about this—yes, of course. Where Athens failed completely, Rome succeeded amazingly. Rome did conquer not only Sicily and Carthage but Greece and Egypt and Persia and so on. What does this mean as far as our present question is concerned?

Now the Roman theorist is of course Cicero. Cicero is silent about the question of size. But it is of course understood that this is the empire of the city of Rome. I mean, that citizenship was extended—you know, that later on practically every inhabitant of the Roman empire, with the exception of slaves, was a citizen, that doesn't do away with the fact that he was a citizen of the city of Rome. And that this was no longer workable in the form of all citizens of Rome assembling in the Forum to make decisions, but only those

who were actually present in Rome could vote, that didn't do away with this kind of—of course [18]the fiction was partially relieved by a universal monarchy and no longer a universal republic. And that of course was one of the most important arguments for people like Montesquieu, that you cannot have a republican society, a free society, if it is too large. I mean, what we take for granted [is that] the question of size is of no importance except for the rather limited issue of the urban problem, crime control and traffic; in other words, the question of size is no political issue. That is true only perhaps after the American Civil War. Lincoln, in one of his speeches, [in the Gettysburg Address], still stated[19] [that] it had not yet been proven. That is a test, whether America survives that, the test of a free government. Free government means republican government. At that time, look at the map—oh, you don't have to go so far back. Look at the map of 1914 and compare it with a map of 1918. Up to 1914, the mass of the world was ruled monarchically, maybe by limited monarchies or constitutional monarchies, but monarchically. Germany was a monarchy, Russia was a monarchy, Austria-Hungary, Britain was a monarchy, you know. There are some famous practitioners of politics in England, like Churchill—Churchill still calls England a monarchy. But all right, let us say that this is one of these quaint British things, and let us not mention it. But in 1856, where did you have republics, working republics? Not in France, which was controlled by Napoleon the Third, and France had been a republic for a few years in the French Revolution, and it was a disgraceful performance with constant butcheries. And then they had a [republic], then, from '48 to '51, which also didn't work, and Napoleon[xxxi] had somehow to—[xxxii]

[xxxi] Napoleon III (Charles-Louis Napoléon Bonaparte, 1807-1873), nephew of Napoleon I. Elected President of the Second French Republic in December 1848, he staged a coup in December 1851 and had himself proclaimed Prince-President and a year later Emperor Napoleon III. He was deposed in 1870 following France's disastrous defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.

[xxxii] The tape ends at this point.

Session 9: no date
Book 4, chapters 70-135

Leo Strauss: There was one thing that you said in the beginning which was not clear to me.[i] Of course I concentrate on what was not clear rather than the many things that were clear. That Brasidas's policy was like Pericles's policy—I know you added a long commentary, but what did you mean by this assertion?

Student: Well, chiefly that Sparta is now in the position that Athens was in earlier. It wanted peace, and its efforts were to compel, or to try to persuade Athens to accept peace; and although this may not have been Brasidas's aim in his campaign, it was an effect of his campaign.

LS: In other words, what you mean was this: perhaps an offensive military strategy in the service of the defensive. You put in now a crucial qualification: it may be the effect, but not the intention of Brasidas. I have the feeling that Brasidas would have liked to win the war, i.e., to destroy Athenian power, you know, not merely to restore the status quo, whereas the Periclean policy was simply to keep the status quo. And that was not also the Spartan official policy. It became the Spartan official policy after Pylus, you know, after the three hundred *hombres* of whom we have spoken last time.

Now I think we should first discuss the main questions here. You remember the situation: the terrific success at Pylos, further successes thanks to the Athenian navy, and they even had threatened Sicily already, but this was still on the horizon. Then comes the first setback: the attempt to conquer Megara, very close to Athens, fails. The Athenians prepare the expedition into Boeotia while Brasidas prepares his expedition into Thrace: the first, a complete failure; the Spartans, an amazing success. Now in this connection a few remarks were made to which you referred, but at which we should look. In chapter 80, about the Spartan internal problems, my reference seems to be incorrect. Where is this passage about the Helots? If you have it, will you please read it?

Reader:
And because also they desired a pretence to send away part of their helots, for fear they should take the opportunity of the present state of their affairs, the enemies lying now in Pylus, to innovate. For they did also this further, fearing the youth and multitude of their helots, for the Lacedaemonians had ever many ordinances concerning how to look to themselves against the helots. They caused a proclamation to be made that as many of them as claimed the estimation to have done the Lacedaemonians best service in their wars should be made free; feeling them in this manner and conceiving that, as they should every one out of pride deem himself worthy to be first made free, so they would soonest also rebel against them. And when they had thus preferred about two thousand,

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

which also with crowns on their heads went in procession about the temples as to receive their liberty, they not long after made them away—[ii]

LS: Literally, "made them invisible," because "made away with them" would contradict what follows.

Reader:
And no man knew how they perished. And now at this time, with all their hearts, they sent away seven hundred men of arms more of the same men along with Brasidas.

LS: Now this is only a casual remark but of utmost importance for the understanding of the basis and the working of the Spartan polity. I mean, here we have the sound and solid reason for Spartan moderation. Now we go on and read the next chapter, because it is the first eulogy of Brasidas; there will be another one later.

Reader:
But Brasidas himself the Lacedaemonians sent out chiefly because it was his own desire; notwithstanding the Chalcideans also longed to have him, as one esteemed also in Sparta every way an active man. And when he was out, he did the Lacedaemonians very great service. For by showing himself at that present just and moderate toward the cities—

LS: Presenting himself, exhibiting himself. One necessarily puts the emphasis on mere exhibiting. [. . .] The correction which is to be made will come in the second eulogy. So, showing himself, showing himself just and moderate—*metrios*, not *sōphrōn*—he caused them to revolt, and some of them he also took by treason.

Reader:
Whereby it came to pass that if the Lacedaemonians pleased to come to composition (as also they did), they might have towns to render and receive reciprocally. And also long after, after the Sicilian War, the virtue and wisdom—

LS: Intelligence.

Reader:
which Brasidas showed now, to some known by experience, by others believed upon from report, was the principal cause that made the Athenian confederates affect the Lacedaemonians. For being the first that went out, and esteemed in all points for a worthy man, he left behind him an assured hope that the rest also were like him.

LS: The expectation that the other Spartans would be of the same kind, an expectation which proved to be wholly wrong. He is the exception.

Then there is the political speech of Brasidas in chapters 85 to 87. I say the political speech because there will be later on a speech to his army, to which the speaker referred. Before he gives this speech in the ordinary manner, Thucydides remarks that he was also

[ii] Thucydides 4.80-81.

not unable, as a Lacedaemonian, to speak. I mean, in other words, he was a good speaker, at least for a Spartan, who were much more men of silent deeds, including the silent doing away with helots, than the Athenians. He speaks with amazing gentleness. The main point: the Spartans wage the war of liberation of Greece. He stresses his own position lest there be a prejudice based on earlier experience against Sparta in general—at the beginning of chapter 86. Will you read that?

Reader:
I come not hither to hurt—

LS: "I myself," that is the emphasis.

Reader:
but to set free the Grecians; and I have the Lacedaemonian magistrates bound unto me by great oaths—

LS: "By the greatest oaths." In other words, it is absolutely "I myself, whom you see, and obviously an honest man, and then in addition the authorities in Sparta have sworn to me the greatest oaths."

Reader:
that whatsoever confederates shall be added to their side, at least by me, shall still enjoy—

LS: You see, again, "by *me*."

Reader:
their own laws; and that we shall not hold you as confederates to us brought in either force or fraud, but on the contrary, be confederates to you that are kept in servitude by the Athenians. And therefore I claim not only that you be not jealous of me (especially having given you good assurance)—

LS: "Given me these greatest assurances,"[iii] meaning the famous Spartan oaths.

Reader:
or think me unable to defend you, but also that you declare yourselves boldly with me.

LS: Now that is of course[1] the other point: the good will of the Spartans is not enough. They must also be strong, because if they come to liberate these allies and the allies desert, they will later on be punished by Cleon [. . .] so you must give them guarantees that he is able to defend them.

Reader:
And if any men be unwilling so to do through fear of some particular man, apprehending that I would put the city into the hands of a few, let him cast away that fear; for I came

[iii] Strauss supplies "given me" in place of the correct "given you."

not to side, nor do I think I should bring you an assured liberty, if neglecting the ancient use here—

LS: Literally translated, "the ancestral." "If disregarding the ancestral, that to which you are accustomed."

Reader:
I should enthral either the multitude to the few, or the few to the multitude.[iv]

LS: The larger part to the few, or the smaller part to all. This was not brought out in your translation. Do you see the disharmony: the many to the few, or the few, not to the many, but to all? That is an indication of the fundamental problem of democracy as the ancients saw it. Democracy claims to be the rule not of the many but of all, and yet it is the rule of the many. That is the difficulty. We discussed that when we spoke about Aristotle last time. Do you remember how I tried to solve the difficulty, why democracy, while being in fact the rule of the many, does not call itself the rule of the many?

Student: [. . .] call themselves the rule of the free, or free-born.

LS: In other words, the title on which democracy rested is the rule of all free men. But what would be the characteristic of the many as many, as distinguished from all?

Student: This seems to me to be a problem of self-definition. The few see themselves as the holders of certain virtues. When the many think of themselves, they consider themselves not only the many in numbers, but as the vehicle of whatever virtues—

LS: But which virtues do the many have, may I ask?

Same Student: Equality.

LS: The few can also have equality.

Same Student: They are poor.

LS: That is it. So we shouldn't speak of virtue but say that the characteristic of the many as many is poverty. And the characteristic of the few as few is wealth, virtue, whatever it may be. Now wealth and virtue are things to boast of. Poverty is nothing to boast of. Poverty can be an excuse for relief, you know, but not for political rights. So if you want political rights you must have a virtue, and this virtue is that of a free man. But once you say that, you must include the rich too because they are also free men. So this is, I think, the solution of this difficulty which is there indicated. And now let us read the end of this chapter.

Reader:
For to be governed so were worse than the domination of a foreigner—

[iv] Thucydides 4.86.

LS: For the many to be governed by the rich, and for the rich to be governed by the poor, that would be worse than foreign domination. By the way, you can see from here that Brasidas is not a democrat. This can safely be inferred from that. You can say that he has the same preference which Thucydides himself seems to reveal later on when he speaks of a kind of mixed regime.

Student: Does the term "mixed" occur?

LS: No, no, but the expression occurs frequently. The ordinary term which Thucydides uses, by the way, is "the powerful ones."[v] But this power is of course based largely on wealth.

Reader:
and there would result from it to us Lacedaemonians not thanks for our labours, but instead of honour and glory, an imputation of those crimes for which we make war amongst the Athenians, and which would be more odious in us than in them that never pretended the virtue.

LS: In other words, the Athenians were just playing a game, and we come as the liberators of Greece, so we have obligations the Athenians don't have.

Reader:
For it is more dishonourable, at least to men in dignity, to amplify their estate by specious fraud than by open violence. For the latter assaileth with a certain right of power given us by fortune, but the other with the treachery of a wicked conscience.

LS: In other words, plain force is not so despicable as fraud. That increases the proof that he doesn't deceive. He would perhaps use force, but under no circumstances deception. Which is very nice, but it doesn't prove that it is really true.

Now we come to the interesting question which our speaker well understood, that Brasidas wants to liberate these people, but not all of them want to be liberated. As Rousseau formulated it, forcing them to be free. Forcing them to be free. Can this be done? How does he reply to that? Chapter 87.

Reader:
But if after these promises of mine you shall say you cannot, and yet, forasmuch as your affection is with us, will claim impunity for rejecting us, or shall say that this liberty I offer you seems to be accompanied with danger, and that it were well done to offer it to such as can receive it, but not to force it upon any

LS: "Any who is unwilling."

Reader:

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[v] Greek *hoi dynatoi.*

then will I call to witness the gods and heroes of this place that my counsel which you refuse was for your good, and will endeavor, by wasting of your territory, to compel you to it. Nor shall I think I do you therein any wrong, but have reason for it for two necessities: one, of the Lacedaemonians, lest whilst they have your affections and not your society, they should receive hurt from your contributions of money to the Athenians; another, of the Grecians, lest they should be hindered of their liberty by your example.

LS: In other words, he also allows for the simple Spartan self-interest. I mean, you are our enemies by having the Athenians . . . [vi] It is perfectly compatible with our righteous purpose, because Sparta being dedicated to the liberation of all Greece, the self-interest of Sparta becomes the common interest of all Greece. It is as simple as that.

Reader:
For otherwise indeed we could not justly do it; nor ought we Lacedaemonians to set any at liberty against their wills if it were not for some common good. We covet not dominion [over you]; but seeing we haste to make others lay down the same, we should do injury to the greater part, if bringing liberty to the other states in general we should tolerate you to cross us. Deliberate well of these things; strive to be the beginners of liberty in Greece, to get yourselves eternal glory, to preserve every man his private estate from damage, and to invest the whole city with a most honourable title.

LS: This is then Brasidas's answer to the question, Can one justly force anyone to be free? Yes, if his refusal to be free leads to the enslavement of others. He appeals to the truly common good which happens to coincide with Sparta's private good. Of course there is an amazing contrast between this speech and what the Spartans did at Plataea, you remember, when they reduced the whole question to the query: Did you do anything for Sparta in this war? No? Head off! I mean, Brasidas's method is much more humane and also the more prudent.

Student: Wasn't there a direct parallel between this speech and the one by Archidamus before the Plataeans where [there was] the question of the oath, the ancient oath, about keeping Plataea free? And the Plataeans then come up to Archidamus and say: Look, you can't do this to us because [you] promised us to keep our freedom. And so Archidamus leaves, and when he comes back he says: Well, yes, but[2] you cannot do it to enslave the rest of Greece, which is the cause that you are working for [. . .][vii]

LS: In other words, you contend that Brasidas is not a bit superior as a speaker to Archidamus—would you go that far?

Same Student: No, I wouldn't go that far.

LS: Well, what is the difference? I simply don't remember now the speech of Archidamus sufficiently. You seem to remember it better.[viii]

[vi] Possibly "by having the Athenians as your allies."
[vii] Thucydides 2.71-72.
[viii] Archidamus's speech is to be found at 2.74; cf. his offer to the Plataeans at 2.72.

Same Student: What I remember as so striking was this religious oath, and yet it seemed to be absurd that the Plataeans were the allies of the Athenians and would therefore be permitted to be let alone by Spartans all on the basis of this oath a long way back, and yet the Spartans seemed to be forced to go along with this old oath [. . .]

LS: Yes, but I think the context is also important. This happened after the disgraceful breach of the truce by the Thebans, and in this context, whereas here the context seems to be cleaner. But I wonder if that shows in the speech itself. I will have another look at it; or does anyone else here remember that and could therefore tell us the difference between Brasidas's and Archidamus's speeches? I must say that I have the feeling that the overall notion of Sparta as the liberator and approaching the allies of Athens in such a gentle way was not Archidamus's line. A commentator raises this question: Why did not Brasidas simply say, "You are not neutral, but an ally of Athens whether you like it or not"? That is a good question: why did he not say that? I think that is the difference, because Archidamus speaks of them always as allies of Athens. Brasidas did not do that. Well, I think Brasidas is very shrewd in not doing it, because by speaking of them as allies of Athens he would imply that someone could be friendly to the tyrant city. He simply disregards the alliance: Of course it was forced on you poor people by the tyrant city. And in addition he thus prevents the whole issue of whether you can honestly betray your allies from coming up. You remember the question that the Mytilenaeans made so much fuss about, that according to the general rule it is regarded as dishonorable to desert your ally when he is in trouble. This whole question is removed—which I think is really [the sign of] a good speaker for a Spartan, if I may quote Thucydides.[ix]

In the next chapter, the crucial importance of the Acanthians trusting oaths. This issue will come up in various ways later. Now then comes the report of the disastrous campaign of the Athenians in Boeotia, the defeat at Delium. Now the Athenians fortified at Delium the temple of Apollo, and Thucydides develops what they did there in chapter 90. He doesn't say a word of disapproval, but I get the distinct impression that this cannot have been compatible with the Greeks' notion of piety. In other words, it looks like a description of a sacrilegious act, although not described as that. And then immediately afterward I found the confirmation in the Boeotian speech that they used the temple as a fort. Then the Boeotian commander, Pagondas, addresses his Boeotian army in chapter 92, also a speech very impressive by its high principles. The Athenians, out of desire for more, out of greed voluntarily enter other men's lands. They try to enslave all; they have no limited objectives. If confronted with such people it is wise to take the initiative, i.e., to begin the war. Does this ring a bell?

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but what does it mean? It has a very specific reference.

Same Student: They began the war.

[ix] Thucydides 4.84.2.

LS: Sure, they committed an illegal act, clearly illegal act, and he gives a kind of natural law justification for what was against the positive law. And he reminds us also of course of the former victory of the Boeotians over the Athenians, and especially of the help of the gods considering the sacrilege committed by the Athenians at Delium. So that in a way settles it. You see, you must not forget that Thucydides does describe, if in an ironical way, a kind of divine providence. The Delphic oracle had told Sparta at the beginning of the war that he would come to their help, to the help of the Spartans, called or uncalled. And who won the war? The Spartans. More specifically, the first decisive blow, almost decisive blow, given to the Athenians was the plague, an act of Apollo. And here also the Athenians commit a sacrilegious act and they were defeated. Thucydides does not regard this as the true causality, but he would not be surprised if some people, many people, would look at it this way. In other words, the case is perfectly clear, the moral case, for the Boeotians, and therefore it is very easy for their general to address the troops.

Then there comes the speech of the Athenian general who will be severely defeated, Hippocrates, in chapter 95. Let us read this very brief speech.

Reader:
"Men of Athens, my exhortation shall be short, but with valiant men it hath as much force as a longer, and is for a remembrance rather than a command. Let no man think, because it is in the territory of another, that we therefore precipitate ourselves into a great danger that did not concern us."

LS: In other words, the awkward thing that people are not engaged in defending their homeland, their home territory. It is always more convincing for the simple soldier[3] than if he has to fight on foreign territory.

Reader:
"For in the territory of these men, you fight for your own. If we get the victory, the Peloponnesians will never invade our territories again, for want of the Boeotian horsemen. So that in one battle you shall both gain this territory and free your own. Therefore march on against the enemy, every one as becometh the dignity both of his natural city, which he glorieth to be chief of all Greece, and of his ancestors, who having overcome these men at Oenophyta under the conduct of Myronides, were in times past masters of all Boeotia."[x]

LS: "Natural city" is not in the Greek, simply "fatherland." There is one little thing, I believe, that Hobbes did not bring out. At the end of this extremely short speech—there are such short speeches, but for an Athenian it was particularly short—Thucydides says usually at the end of such short speeches [*tosauta*]: "after the general had so much," "so much" emphasizing the quality of the speech. In the longer speeches he says [*toiauta*]: "such like this." Here he does not say, as he would normally say, "such like things," but "so many things"—I'm sorry, he does not say "so many things," meaning "so briefly," but "such like things." I note this; I don't have any explanation of that.

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[x] Thucydides 4.95.

He has the same theme as his opposite number, Pagondas: to fight a big dangerous battle in alien territory that must be defended. And the answer is [that] the fight is in the protection of our own land, in liberation of our own land which is constantly invaded by the Boeotians. But he cannot suppress the thought [of] the acquisition of Boetia. Do you remember when he says that? "In a single battle you will acquire in addition this land and liberate your own—to a higher degree." It surely is the very opposite of a stirring speech, that we can safely say. I mean, it is a perfectly fit speech on the eve of a defeat. Thucydides has given us a specimen of that.

Now the Athenians lose the battle absolutely, and now a big issue arises. And what is the big issue which arises after the battle? It is discussed in chapters 97 and 98. Well, the dead. The Athenians had to flee [and] had to leave their dead behind. And it was absolutely necessary to get the dead back under the protection of a truce. So the vanquished had to come cap in hand to the victor. And this was a rule always observed hitherto by the victor to give the dead back. Let us read that in chapter 97.

Reader:
In the meantime, a herald sent from the Athenians to require the bodies met with a herald by the way sent by the Boeotians, which turned him back by telling him he could get nothing done till himself was returned from the Athenians. This herald, when he came before the Athenians, delivered unto them what the Boeotians had given him in charge, namely, that they had done unjustly to transgress the universal law of the Grecians, being a constitution received by them all; that the invader of another's country should abstain from all holy places in the same; that the Athenians had fortified Delium and dwelt in it, and done whatsoever else men use to do in places profane, and had drawn that water to the common use, which was unlawful for themselves to have touched, save only to wash their hands for the sacrifice; that therefore the Boeotians, both in the behalf of the god and of themselves, invoking Apollo and all the interested spirits, did warn them to be gone and to remove their stuff out of the temple.[xi]

LS: You see, that is a very big issue which arises for the first time in this book, that the ordinary rule to restore the dead to the vanquished is transgressed on religious grounds, because the Athenians had done something much more awful. The story reminds of the story of Cylon and so on in the first book; it is a real parallel to that.

The Athenian answer is interesting regarding the key point in chapter 98, regarding the use of water for profane purposes. Do you find that? It is in about the middle of chapter 98.

Reader:
that for the water, they meddled with it upon necessity; which was not to be ascribed to insolence, but to this—

[xi] Thucydides 4.97.

LS: You see, necessity justifies it. Insolence is *hubris*; if you do something from *hubris*—you know, a sinful rebellion against the will of the gods—that is of course sacrilege. But if you do it out of necessity, that is justifiable.

Reader:
that fighting against the Boeotians that had invaded their territory first, they were forced to use it; for whatsoever is forced by war or danger hath in reason a kind of pardon even with the god himself; for the altars, in cases of involuntary offences, are a refuge, and they are said to violate laws that are evil without constraint, not they that are a little bold upon occasion of distress; that the Boeotians themselves, who require restitution of the holy places for a redemption of the dead, are more irreligious by far than they, who, rather than let their temples go, are content to go without that which were fit for them to receive— [xii]

LS: In other words, the Boeotians are not under duress when they withhold the corpses; the Athenians were under duress, and the god himself recognized it. In other words, the Athenians vindicate themselves very clearly. Now Thucydides's account of this exchange is more extensive than his account of the battle of Delium itself. That is very interesting, and a commentator whom I consulted is quite[4] [bemused] by it.[xiii] I am not, because for Thucydides these issues are terribly important. Not that he believes in divine vengeance and this kind of thing, but this is a major question because it affects political societies and their actions.

The Thebans throughout the whole thing prove again to be nasty people, judged very simply. Yet the principles to which Pagondas refers in his speech are juster than those of Athens. Looking entirely on the surface, the Thebans have not committed a sacrilege and they win the victory. I mean, however, there is a certain rhetorical argument that can be based on this seeming condemnation of [. . .]

Now we come back to the northern campaign, the campaign in Thrace, and here we have this brief reference to something which you did not mention, and that is that Thucydides himself is a general. What happened? After all, it is in a way one of the most interesting incidents in the book, because we see now how a historian, a wise man, as actor . . . What happened? That is one of the most frequently mistrust[ed] passages in the book.

Student: He doesn't arrive on time.

LS: He doesn't arrive on time at Amphipolis.

Same Student: He doesn't even arrive, as a matter of fact.

LS: Amphipolis cedes and the city there is lost. He can save only a relatively small harbor town south of Amphipolis, Eion. And that does not yet come out here; in the next book he will mention in passing that he was exiled. It is plausible to assume, I think

[xii] Thucydides 4.98.
[xiii] Gomme, *Historical Commentary*.

everyone does this, that he was exiled for this alleged failure. The word he used, *pheugōn*, does not necessarily mean that he was exiled; it can also mean having fled, you know, prior to any trial. But it is reasonable to assume that his leaving Athens and spending the rest of the war in Peloponnesian territory was a consequence of this unfortunate situation in the north.

Now many modern readers have been surprised by the fact that there is not a word of apology. And to the cruder intelligence this is a proof of guilt; and the subtler people say that he could conceivably have been a man of such nobility that he did not wish to degrade himself by using part of this historical work, as some later generals have done, for excusing himself. And one can very well say that the apology is in the narrative; for example, that the disastrous campaign in Boeotia should never have been made. If these troops had been in the north, Brasidas would have been unable to have these spectacular successes, and in addition it is perfectly possible that Thucydides was not in command in Amphipolis. And that may have been due to all kinds of [. . .] and he was [in] command only at the seashore with a very small force, seven galleys. In other words, the Athenians did not use the great local power which they possessed because this very large property was in their history, as is mentioned here. One would have to read a few chapters to give the whole account of Thucydides.

Student: I thought he gave himself an escape clause in there, chapter 104, where he speaks in the third person: "His purpose principally was to prevent the yielding up of Amphipolis; but if he should fail of that, then to possess himself of Eion [before Brasidas's coming]."

LS: And that he got, or he took. It will prove to be very important in the campaign of the next year.

Same Student: In other words, he had preconceived this and was very happy when he could arrive—

LS: Yes, but they have figured it out—the people who know locale, who went and measured the whole thing—[that] the maximum which could possibly be done by Thucydides was to get Eion. I mean, it was absolutely impossible to go beyond that. He hoped against hope that he could go further. No, the apology, if one can call it [that], is that after having heard it he sailed with speed with seven galleys which happened to be present. In other words, he did not have command of a sufficient naval force. This is by no means uninteresting because it throws some light on the author. There follows immediately afterward a new eulogy of Brasidas, which we should read, chapter 108.

Reader:
After Amphipolis was taken, the Athenians were brought into great fear—

LS: One second. Amphipolis had a comparable effect on Athenian morale as Pylus had on Spartan morale. But you will see that the Athenians do not as easily give in as the Spartans.

Reader:
especially for that it was a city that yielded them much profit, both in timber which is sent them for the building of galleys and in revenue of money, and because also, though the Lacedaemonians had a passage open to come against their confederates, the Thessalians convoying them, as far as to Strymon, yet if they had not gotten that bridge, the river being upwards nothing but a vast fen, and towards Eion well guarded with their galleys, they could have gone no further; which now they thought they might easily do, and therefore feared lest their confederates should revolt.

LS: In other words, what he brings out is this: the whole difficulty had arisen thanks to a single man, Brasidas. That gives occasion to his later statements.

Reader:
For Brasidas both showed himself otherwise very moderate—

LS: Remember, again, *metrios*, not *sōphrōn*. We have discussed that on a former occasion; I mean, *sōphrōn* has much more of a moral connotation than *metrios* has. *Metrios* is derivative from *metron*, "measure," meaning that he acted correctly, you know. One could almost say punning: he took the right measures; whereas "moderation," *sōphrosunē*, had almost the connotation of reverence and limiting oneself out of a sense of reverence.

Reader:
and also gave out in speech that he was sent forth to recover the liberty of Greece. And the cities which were subject to the Athenians, hearing of the taking of Amphipolis, and what assurance he brought with him, and of his gentleness besides—

LS: His mildness. By the way, a quality never ascribed to Pericles, for example. One could ascribe it surely to Nicias and also to Diodotus, but in fact it is not ascribed to them either.

Reader:
were extremely desirous of innovation, and sent messengers privily to bid him draw near, every one striving who should first revolt. For they thought they might do it boldly, falsely estimating the power of the Athenians to be less than afterwards it appeared, and making a judgment of it according to [blind] wilfulness rather than safe forecast; it being the fashion of men, what they wish to be true to admit even upon an ungrounded hope, and what they wish not, with a magistral kind of arguing to reject.

LS: You see, in other words, [when] they use reason it is not necessary. If they do not desire something, they bring up a very powerful argument against it. And in the other case, where there would really be need for reason, then reason becomes subservient.

Reader:

Withal, because the Athenians had lately received a blow from the Boeotians, and because Brasidas had said (not as was the truth, but as served best to allure them) that when he was at Nisaea the Athenians durst not fight with those forces of his alone, they grew confident thereon, and believed not that any man would come against them.[xiv]

LS: We will stop here for one moment and then go on. Do you note the difference between this eulogy and the first eulogy? Chapter 81. I mean here, for instance, his gentleness is explicitly mentioned, but on the other hand another quality was mentioned in the first eulogy which is now no longer mentioned. In the first eulogy he is said to have presented himself as "just" and "measured." "Just" is now dropped. Whether it had something to do with the fact that he lied so grossly, that is not [. . .] But at any rate, he was an outstanding man, and one could perhaps say that this was such a unique case of Brasidas that if the Athenians were surprised by that and made mistakes in Thrace, it is not to be wondered at. It was not something to be expected from a Spartan. It is possible. At any rate, we come now to the question of Sparta again, after we have seen the exceptional Spartan.

Reader:
But the greatest cause of all was that for the delight they took at this time to innovate, and for that they were to make trial of the Lacedaemonians, not till now angry, they were content by any means to put it to the hazard. Which being perceived, the Athenians sent garrison soldiers into those cities, as many as the shortness of the time and the season of winter would permit. And Brasidas sent unto Lacedaemon to demand greater forces, and in the meantime prepared to build galleys on the river Strymon.

LS: So in other words, they plan a decisive campaign. Brasidas wants a much larger army and a local navy. And the Athenians are now alarmed.

Reader:
But the Lacedaemonians, partly through envy of the principal men, and partly because they more affected the redemption of their men taken in the island and the end of the war, refused to furnish him.

LS: Here we see the difficulties where Sparta, in contradistinction to Brasidas, in opposition to Brasidas, raises its familiar head. Now this needs some understanding. The first men are envious of Brasidas, and they are concerned with their hombres—you remember the three hundred men captured on Sphacteria. In other words, here a major defect of the Spartan set-up appears. What is the difference between the Spartan defect and the Athenian defect? I think that is of some importance. You remember the key statement in book 2, chapter 65, that apart from short periods under Pericles in Athens, the ambitions of the various individuals, leading individuals, their envy—ambition always includes envy—and therefore private interest is not subservient to the common interest. So the same is true of Sparta.

[xiv] Thucydides 4.108.

Student: The envy within the Athenian people spurred them on to greater ventures; whereas the envy within the Spartans pulled them back.

LS: That is a good point, but I believe it has to be traced to a more fundamental reason. In Sparta there was harmony among the leading men. There was envy of the very rare deviationist, I mean for good or ill. There is, especially, envy of the opposed outstanding individual who is different and therefore not quite Spartan. In Athens there is disharmony among the principal men, you know—that I believe, and that has a deeper reason because Sparta is altogether not favorable to the development of individuals. But also she does not need them so much because she has always a sufficient supply of good mediocrities. That is something. And if they have the necessary decency and public spirit, that may be better than to have a supply of geniuses who are at loggerheads. Athens, if favorable to the development of individuals—and she needs them, as is shown most clearly by their need for Pericles and [of] Pericles for them—yet there is necessarily disharmony among the leading men in Athens.

Student: Doesn't that indicate a certain ungratefulness on the part of the Spartans?

LS: Yes, sure it does. But gratitude is, I believe, not something on which one can count in political matters. Do you remember when Churchill lost the election in '45 (was it '45?) that he said—well, he was a very generous man, and if it sounded ungenerous it surely wasn't meant ungenerously—did he not say that the British people showed their gratitude for his war leadership by voting him out of office immediately after the war was over? Something of this kind? And that is so. You are right, but whether it is very relevant in our context . . .

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Well, I'm sure that Churchill could easily have become an earl, peer, or so. There are signs of gratitude which are of no political relevance and yet make a good impression. In chapter 114 we find another specimen of Brasidas's excellence. That is the second part of chapter 114.

Reader:
He also called an assembly of the Toronaeans and spake unto them as he had done before to the Acanthians, adding that there was no just cause why either they that had practiced to put the city into his hands should be the worse thought of or accounted traitors for it, seeing that they did it with no intent to bring the city into servitude, nor were hired thereunto with money, but for the benefit and liberty of the city—

LS: You see, he had to defend these people who are technically traitors, who opened the doors to him.

Reader:
or that they which were not made acquainted with it should think that themselves were not to reap as much good by it as the others; for he came not to destroy either city or man,

but had therefore made that proclamation touching those that fled with the Athenians because he thought them never the worse for that friendship, and made account when they had made trial of the Lacedaemonians, they would show as much good will also unto them, or rather more, inasmuch as they would behave themselves with more equity; and that their present fear was only upon want of trial. Withal he wished them to prepare themselves to be true confederates for the future, and from henceforward, to look to have their faults imputed; for, for what was past, he thought they had not done any wrong, but suffered it rather from other men that were too strong for them, and therefore were to be pardoned if they had in aught been against him.[xv]

LS: I believe that this shows very clearly the difference between Archidamus and Brasidas. There was no suggestion of this kind, that the alliance with Athens would never be held against them because they were acting under duress, you know. I think he is much better, at least a much more prudent, speaker than Archidamus was, which does not necessarily mean that Archidamus was not a nice old gentleman—I think he was, but he was not so flexible as Brasidas.

Now there is another point which I would like to mention briefly for what it may be worth. At the end of chapter 116, will you read the last sentence?

Reader:
The rest of this winter he spent in assuring the places he had already gotten and in contriving the conquest of more. Which winter ending, ended the eighth year of this war.

LS: Look at the end of the book, of book 4, just the last sentence.

Reader:
So ended this winter, and the ninth year of this war written by Thucydides.[xvi]

LS: You see, that is the formula which Thucydides uses: "And thus ended the winter and the *n*th year of the war." And in most cases he adds "of this war which Thucydides has narrated." But he does not do that in all cases; for example, in the case of the eighth year where we are now, he does not do it. Now I would like to mention this very briefly as one of these broader problems of the whole book. We have discussed some of them, especially with regard to the first book on an earlier occasion. He mentions himself in this formula at the end of the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth, and sixteenth to twentieth years. He does not mention himself at the end of the first, eighth, and tenth to fifteenth years. These are the facts, and the end of the twenty-first could not very well be mentioned because that was not completed. I mean the end of the whole book. I mean, I don't believe that this irregularity is due to insufficient revision, because this kind of thing could easily have been done at the first writing down. He simply wrote in each case that this was the end of the winter in the year number so-and-so, and either add or do not add "of the war which Thucydides has described." Now does it make sense? Now I would say this, that he does not mention [that] the years ten to fifteen, which are all in the

[xv] Thucydides 4.114.
[xvi] Thucydides 4.135.

fifth book, are the lean years, meaning the truce—you know, that was the peace of Nicias before the Sicilian expedition. This is easy to explain. Also he does not mention himself at the end of the first year because this remark followed there immediately after the funeral speech, and after this big solemn affair the prosaic remark "the war which Thucydides has described" could have been felt to be a terrible anti-climax. So this I think we can understand. Then the only difficulty is in our place: Why does he not mention it here, his own name, in 4.116? There is a pattern. If you would put this in a list you would see that prior to this point here there are six mentions of Thucydides at the end of the year, and afterward there are also exactly six mentions of Thucydides. There is generally a pattern. What does this mean?

Student: Does it have anything to do with fact that you already mentioned yourself [. . .]

LS: That is the most plausible and perhaps the most sensible explanation. In other words, that this year, the eighth year, is the year in which his own generalship is discussed. That could be; and I would say from the point of view of common sense it will always be regarded as the soundest explanation. I may mention that I have not seen the commentators worrying about this particular point, because there is always the excuse that the book is unfinished and the man who compiled or revised it was a great fool. That is always a great assumption of this kind of higher criticism. I know it from Old Testament criticism; they always assume that the compiler of these various works was an extremely foolish man and all their solutions would look different if one would make the hypothetical assumption that he might have been a man of some intelligence. A lot of these explanations would be destroyed by this assumption, which is as hypothetical as the other assumption, that he was a complete fool.

Now here I don't think this is a matter of accident, and what you have said is perfectly good. The last sentence of Thucydides's work is, as people say, manifestly just the point where Thucydides was interrupted by death. It is not thought to make any sense. It is the sentence that Tissaphernes moved up to Ephesus and sacrificed to Artemis.[xvii] Artemis is the sister of Apollo, and [Artemis] is the last word of Thucydides's text. The sentence which follows that, even if it is by Thucydides, is clearly of a different order, because it is to this effect: "And if this summer is at the end, the *n*th year of the war would have been." That would belong to a different order. So Artemis is really the last substantive word mentioned. Now if you look at chapter 116, the last story told there, what is it? Now let us read chapter 116, the capture of a city, Lecythus.

Reader:
Brasidas, when he perceived the battlements to be abandoned and saw what had happened, came on with his army and presently got the fort and slew all that he found within it. But the rest of the Athenians which before abandoned the place, with their boats and galleys put into Pallene.

There was in Lecythus a temple of Minerva.

[xvii] Thucydides 8.109.

LS: That is, Athena. Hobbes always gives the Latin names.

Reader:
And when Brasidas was about to give the assault, he had made proclamation that whosoever first scaled the wall should have thirty minae of silver for a reward.

LS: That was a terrific award. I couldn't tell you what the equivalent in English money is now, but it was extraordinarily high. I read that in a commentary.[xviii]

Reader:
Brasidas now, conceiving that the place was won by means not human—

LS: There was a breakdown of a wall they had built.

Reader:
gave those thirty minae to the goddess to the use of the temple. And then pulling down Lecythus, he built it anew and consecrated unto her the whole place.[xix]

LS: In other words, Brasidas dedicated money and a city to Athena. Brasidas is an amazingly Athenian Spartan, sacrificing and dedicating things to the protectress of Athens. It makes so much sense to me that this should be the counter action to Tissaphernes the Persian sacrificing to this graceful huntress, Artemis, but who was surely not the goddess of wisdom as Athena was. Well, I grant it is merely hypothetical, but I think the result would not be unworthy of Thucydides. That is all I can say.

Now let us go on. The result of all this action is that the Athenians have been brought to their senses by Brasidas. Now they are willing to consider what they had rejected after Pylos, namely, the peace.

Student: Is Brasidas's sacrificing to Athena your explanation of why Thucydides mentioned this?

LS: You mean the slight irregularity? Yes. In other words, that six times before he mentioned himself, and afterwards he mentions himself six times. And afterward there is a book, the last part of book 8, the end of the whole book, where there is this story of Artemis.

Same Student: The point being that after something of so great a religious significance he didn't want to bring his name into it.

LS: No, that is not necessarily meant. It would mean not more than this, that the end, the sentence of Tissaphernes sacrificing to Artemis was meant to be the end. And that raised

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[xviii] As it happens, the same amount that Socrates's wealthy friends pledged to pay as an alternative punishment to his execution; so yes, it must have represented a large sum (Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 38b).
[xix] Thucydides 4. 116.

the question: Why should this be the end? Why should Tissaphernes's sacrificing to Artemis occur at the completion of that book? And that leads up the the question: What are the gods in Thucydides's view? That is broadly stated. And that is a question which I think can only be answered on the basis of the Archaeology, the first 23 chapters, and we can take this up on another occasion. But I only wanted to make a plan now for this item for which there is no explanation.

The present-day historians, philologists, some of them very good men—and a woman, by the way, is also among them. I have to say this in honor of the fair sex; really there is a very good commentator, a French woman, Madame de Romilly, who wrote really a very good book. An ornament of her sex, I would have said,[5] a woman of extraordinary accomplishments, I believe, as would have been said by Jane Austen[xx] [. . .] There is Gomme, a very good English commentator, who is surprised about this long story which we say today about this business between the Thebans and the Athenians after the battle of Delium—you know, the sacrilege of the Athenians and the exchange of the corpses. Thucydides speaks as much about that as about the whole battle of Delium. The point is this: all these people think that Thucydides did not believe in the gods of the city. I think this assumption is correct. But they draw the conclusion that hence he was not interested in that subject. About the story of Cylon in book 1, they can of course say that was necessary to say what absurd, silly things cities do in the last stage of peace. You know, still the pretense of negotiation is maintained and everything, so to speak [. . .] I think this is no accident that this had to do with sacred law and this [. . .]

By the way, we find another event: now the truce is made. Now the text of the truce is given verbatim in chapters 118 to 119. There are great difficulties which specialists in this field observe: Is this truly a verbatim report? Are there not some changes made? How could Thucydides have access to it? And so on. I have no judgment about that. What I know is only this: at the beginning of the truce comment—read the beginning of chapter 118, and you will see.

Reader:
"Concerning the temple and oracle of Apollo Pythius, it seemeth good unto us that whosoever will may without fraud and without fear ask counsel thereat, according to the laws of his country. The same also seemeth good to the Lacedaemonians and their confederates here present; and they promise moreover to send ambassadors to the Boeotians and Phoceans, and do their best to persuade them to the same."

LS: You see, because Delphi was in the territory of Boeotia, you know, and they had had direct access to it.

[xx] Jacqueline de Romilly (1913-2010) leading French scholar of classical antiquity and of Thucydides in particular. Her *Thucydide et l'impérialisme athénien* (1947, English translation 1962) revolutionized the study of Thucydides by contending that his work was not rife with contradictions (as then generally held under the influence of the German "higher criticism") but consistent in its treatment of fundamental issues. She continued to write insightfully on Thucydides throughout her long life.

Reader:
"That concerning the treasure belonging to the god, we shall take care to find out those that have offended therein, both we and you, proceeding with right and equity, according to the laws of our several states; and that whosoever else will may do the same every one according to the law of his own country."[xxi]

LS: You see the beginning of the solemn state paper [. . .] I think that has something to do either with a certain notion stemming from the eighteenth century, [that] this world, the pagan world, you know, [was] not concerned with religious matters. Now this has been corrected in many ways by Fustel de Coulanges[xxii] and other great scholars, but in the case of Thucydides it still has not led to the consequence that concedes how important that was for Thucydides—not for his own beliefs, necessarily, but at least for understanding his object, the *polis*.

Now then comes this affair in the west, the northwest part of Greece, where Brasidas is compelled to address his army, chapter 126. The situation is grave, and therefore Brasidas is compelled, as he says, in addition to the usual exhortation also to teach something. This fear of the army can only be counteracted by enlightenment about the situation. Then he comes to the passage, wisely emphasized by the speaker, about the political principle of Sparta, one could say. Now let us read that.

Reader:
"For to be good soldiers is unto you natural, not by the presence of any confederates, but by your own valour; and not to fear others for the number, seeing you are not come from a city where the many bear rule over the few, but the few over the many; and have gotten this for power by no other means than by overcoming in fight."

LS: Now this is of course very relevant, since it would mean this: "In Sparta there is a rule based on military superiority of the few over the many. Hence the present situation where a relatively small army is confronted by many barbarians is for you a familiar situation." It makes very much sense, but there are certain difficulties in translation, and the text would also bear interpretation along these lines: You do not come at all from cities in which not many rule a few, but you do not come from cities in which not many rule a few;[xxiii] i.e., you come from cities in which many rule a few and not a few the many who have won their mastery by military prowess. In other words, the hostile army is a rabble where the really courageous fellows are only a tiny minority of the principal. That is grammatically possible; I must say that. I am sorry about this because it is so beautiful, but one must also consider the text.

The most important part, I think, in this speech is the description of the difference between barbarians and Greeks. It is the only utterance of this kind occurring in the

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[xxi] Thucydides 4.118.
[xxii] Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges (1830-1889), French historian. In *La Cité antique* (1864) he argued on the basis of careful readings of the literary sources that the ancient city in both its Greek and its Roman versions was in origin (and long remained) primarily a sacred association.
[xxiii] As transcribed, this statement does not appear to make sense.

history apart from—well, the whole Archaeology is based on the assertion of the radical difference between Greeks and barbarians, you remember. But it was in no way refined, what Greekness meant. Here some indications are given. The barbarians are characterized by the absence of order, discipline, *kosmos*—which means order, adornment, and derivatives from the word, absence of sense of shame and, one could say, self-respect. Using the following passage which doesn't deal with barbarians as such but with the subject—namely, the speech of Phormio, book 2, chapter 89—one could add to discipline and order also silence. The hoplites march silently down, [as opposed to with] savage war cries.

Student: Didn't they shout the paean?

LS: Yes, but that is a song, not a savage war cry. One could bring this together to a single term, these characteristics: Greekness means love of the beautiful, the beautiful not in the sense of nineteenth-century aesthetes—people who go to museums or, if they are wealthy enough, have such things in their homes—but the people who in the course of everyday life [love] beautiful actions, good and fine manners and all this kind of thing goes on. Noble deeds, what we would call noble deeds would be in Greek "fine deeds," "beautiful deeds," and self-restraint and such things as that.

The last story in the book is of importance. Brasidas clearly breaks the truce. There were certain cases where it was doubtful whether a breach of truce had occurred—could they have known of the truce at that time? But this last thing was clearly after Brasidas was informed by authorities from his own country of the truce, and he breaks it. Brasidas didn't like peace; that will come out clearly in the next book. [6]Brasidas was an entirely different individual than Cleon, but in this respect they belong together. They would have both prolonged the war, and they perished in battle and this way the peace became possible.

Student: In chapter 132, does that mean that Sparta sent governors to the city?

LS: Yes, that is important.

Same Student: Is this a violation of the oath to allow them to govern themselves according to their own laws?

LS: It is extremely dark, what that means. It is a very dark passage. Perhaps we will read this paragraph.

Reader:
Nevertheless Ischagoras and Ameinias and Aristeus themselves went on to Brasidas, as sent by the Lacedaemonians to view the state of affairs there, and also took with them from Sparta, contrary to the law, such men as were but in the beginning of their youth to make them governors of cities rather than commit the cities to the care of such as were there before.[xxiv]

[xxiv] Thucydides 4.132.

LS: Those that happened to be there. Yes, I suppose a man whom Brasidas simply had appointed. It was an anti-Brasidas action, this is clear. The illegality consisted in [this], that they brought young men who should be available for military service and not for political command. Thucydides put the emphasis here only on the breach of a Spartan law; it is clearly also an anti-Brasidas political measure, but he emphasizes the fact that it was a breach of the Spartan law. Well, one could say that that would not necessarily affect the other people other than the Spartans. But I think it is an indication that[7] when Sparta asserts itself, and Brasidas is out of the picture by death or by removal. Surely, I think it is merely put in as indication. And later on, of course, these Spartan commanders, the harmosts, as they were called, in the last years of the war and after the war they are a real scourge. I mean, they are by far inferior to the average Athenian commander. Surely that is the point. You notice here already some rumblings, you know, the picture is too beautiful to be true, this noble and generous liberator of the Greeks fighting for a city which is not given to generosity in any way.

Student: I have a feeling, and I am wondering if I might have it confirmed, that the intensity of the war, the viciousness, and the true enmity between Sparta and Athens which is so apparent in the later books where they are really at each others' throats and there is no quarter given—does this begin here in some way, in Brasidas's acts, and does this stem—

LS: What do you mean, by the way? Was there any particular action of Brasidas which was bestial?

Same Student: A certain self-righteousness that had come to them with the consciousness of freeing Athenian colonies or confederates.

LS: But it isn't self-righteously—I mean, these people probably slit their own throats by prematurely deserting to the Spartans when the Athenians still had power—that came in the last book. But I would say, I think, hitherto I have found specimens of Brasidas's insufficient truthfulness, but not of any beastliness.

Same Student: The second thing which occurs to me is the greed and aggressiveness of the Athenians. They seem to have no limit to their desires for conquest.

LS: That is a common thing.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but the question is: Is the Spartan absence of greed, as you call it, due to virtue or to inability because they have this stone around their legs—you know, the helots problem at home? That is exactly the point which I would like to bring up again to remind us of the broader issue, although it is not the broadest issue. I think we must start—after we have all the evidence together, of course, but we cannot help looking forward already now—from the overall judgments of Thucydides. As I said, more than

one. The broadest judgments occur in book 1 and book 8. And the first book we have read, Sparta who never had bad tyranny and never had civil war, you know, and was an orderly polity, stable, whereas Athens tended to the opposite. And then this remark in the eighth book that the Spartans, apart from the Chians, were the only ones who succeeded in being moderate while being in prosperity. That means clearly that the Athenians were not moderate. And it means they were not moderate at any time, including the time of Pericles, and that is confirmed by the fact that in the praise of Pericles moderation is not mentioned, and Pericles himself doesn't even use the term moderation. One would say [that] almost every speaker uses it except Pericles.[xxv] And that this consideration of moderation is of decisive importance for Thucydides is shown by book 3, chapter 82, the chapter on the civil war in Corcyra, where Thucydides sets forth what the social scientists would call his value scheme, and it is clear that all the emphasis is on moderation and things akin to it rather than on the opposite, which opposite is sometimes called daring. And clearly daring is the key Athenian quality from Themistocles on, and including Pericles, who praises daring so highly in the funeral speech—and of course including Cleon, whose [8]daring was shown by his promise to reduce Sphacteria in twenty days, and Alcibiades [. . .]. The only Athenian exception here is really Nicias—I mean the outstanding exception; and therefore, that Nicias is so greatly praised in the eulogy after the description of his death fits in perfectly.

Now all these considerations are decidedly in favor of Sparta, with one qualification which could be said to be in itself really minor: that the Spartans conducted themselves disgracefully on many occasions. And Thucydides wants us to see the obvious; but one could say one thing of Spartan conduct and other things about Spartan principles, and the principles are not refuted by the fact that the Spartans did not live up to them. This, I think, is the point from which I, for one, would start. A stable regime, neither oppressive on the many nor oppressive on the few—that regime which Athens had only once in Thucydides's lifetime for a few months in 411, as Thucydides says it in book 8; a stable regime, a moderate regime, and a cautious and peaceful foreign policy. This is confirmed by the remark we discussed before when Cleon made this mad promise and the Athenians said—the moderate men in Athens said, "Let him do it, because either he perishes—good riddance—or he conquers Sphacteria, we also like this." But it is made clear that they would have preferred to get rid of Cleon rather than to conquer Sphacteria. If you generalize from that, the good order of the *polis* within is more important than victory in war.

This posture existed, I am sure, in quite a few people in Greece in all the cities, and it is the matrix, if I may say so, out of which Plato and Aristotle's political philosophy grew. They elaborated this and put it on a fundamental basis. This point which was very strongly made by a former speaker is of course open to certain objections most strongly stated by the following speaker. I will try to state this as grossly as possible. The Spartans' conduct was habitually unpleasant and therefore, and with the notable exception of Brasidas, it cannot be so lightly dismissed as I dismissed it by simply saying: Well, the principles were at least better. You would agree; I mean, their pettiness,

[xxv] This is an exaggeration, to say the least: in fact the number of speakers who appeal to *sophrosyne* are few.

their cruelty, their dishonesty, their lack of imagination and initiative. And if one really surrenders to this important part of Thucydides's message, you arrive at the conclusion that the funeral speech, which is so definitely[xxvi] anti-Spartan from beginning to end—I mean opposed to the Spartan principle—presents Thucydides's own view. And I believe this view is the most common among all the interpreters, at least those that I have seen. And especially the eulogy of Pericles in book 2, chapter 65 seems to present Pericles as the standard, and therefore no wonder, then, that Thucydides should have entrusted his case to Pericles. So we have turned from Sparta to the very opposite.

But why can we not leave it at that? In other words, why is the first part of the argument based on these massive explicit judgments of Thucydides made in his own name in book 1 and book 8, why are they not refuted by the evidence to the contrary? You can say that these statements at the beginning and the end are a kind of beginning of [. . .] *doxai*—opinions widely held, which Thucydides states, but rather as problems than as assertions and moves away from them. That happens also in other writers and would be by no means wholly surprising. And one could say in support of this view that the strongest pro-Spartan statement as far as the Peloponnesian War is concerned—[found in] book 2, chapters 8 to 9, [where] Sparta is the liberator of the whole of Greece, you know; and of course that implies Athens is a tyrant—is accepted by Thucydides and stated by him in his own name. [But this] is glaringly refuted by the context in which it occurs. I mean, when you read the beginnings of the second book and see the Thebans, you know, their flagrant breach of peace and so on, and also the other evidence that by no means all the cities were so eager to be "liberated" from Athens as one would expect from these two chapters, one could very well say that Thucydides is capable of making certain statements in his own name without identifying himself with them. I would not reject this in principle, but I don't believe it would be sufficient in order to have the main thing of importance in these pro-Spartan statements. In other words, it is my suspicion that Thucydides must have had a position which was neither identical with the Spartan principles nor identical with the Athenian principles, but somehow could do justice to both without identifying himself with either.

How could we go from here? I mean, if this is a fair statement of the problem, how could we go from here to specific evidence which would allow us to state this broader point or intermediate position?

Student: The speeches of the statesmen Diodotus and Hermocrates.

LS: Now let's take, for example, Hermocrates. What do you mean there?

Same Student: His acceptance at once of the principle of the Athenians and the necessity for moderation, for careful, slow deliberation.

LS: That could conceivably even by admitted by Pericles. I mean, the difficulty regarding Pericles is only this: that Thucydides says he always counteracted the extreme hopefulness of the Athenian *demos*,[9] [the] extreme daring. The difficulty is only that he

[xxvi] Might Strauss have said "defiantly?"

did not give us a single example of Pericles's taking such action. That weakens the assertion a bit, but still, it is so. I would take the other element of Hermocrates, and that is an equally important point: Hermocrates states the principle of imperialism as it was stated so flagrantly in the first book by the Athenians in Sparta; in other words, that the fundamental thing is the right of the stronger. And it would simply come out this way that everyone admits that what is done under duress is not done unjustly; what is done from genuine fear is not done unjustly. So that means of course that what is done out of *hubris*, insolence, or pride, that is wrong. But in practice in foreign affairs, given the absence of any universal protector of any law court, this line is in practice hard to draw. You may be as defensive as you want and as moderate as you want; since you cannot trust your neighbor you may have to act first, as the Theban Pagondas said.[xxvii] You know the famous logic of Hobbes: you want to be a nice man, you want only to preserve yourself, but you do not know whether the other fellow does not want to have more and you cannot trust him. And while he acts from greed or glory and you act from self-preservation, the actions will be undistinguishable although the motives will be radically opposed. And of course I'm sure that Machiavelli also made such an observation. It might of course show in the particular cases very clearly, but in the overall formula for foreign policy it would not show. And I think that fact that the principles as stated by the Athenians in Sparta in the first book are never denied—not even by the Spartan ephor, you know, who had the strongest reason for contesting them, only by the Melians, and the Melians had no other defense except to deny them because they were powerless in every respect—would supply an argument in favor of the view that Thucydides did regard the Athenian principle of expansion, of judicious expansion in the Periclean form, as the true principle. In other words, that Spartan moderation in foreign policy is a necessity imposed on Sparta by her own troubles. Sparta did her dirty business, her conquest of neighboring nations, much earlier. You know the formula which Churchill used against Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia in '37;[xxviii] he doesn't wax indignant about it but simply says it is not in accordance with the high morality of the twentieth century. I mean, when people conquered land in Africa and other places in the nineteenth century, it was taken for granted that you did that. You only had to make a deal with the other powers, you know, like the story of Fashoda[xxix] and whenever there were (how was it called?) conflicts of interest between the conquering powers.

So Sparta had done her conquest of the Messenians centuries before, where no notion of the freedom of all Greeks had any political value, but here it could no longer be done. So, to come back to the main point, Thucydides might very well have doubted that this principle of foreign policy, of international morality asserted by the Spartans, is tenable. And also the other reason which we discussed on another occasion, that the policy of liberating all Greek cities equally, large or small, powerful or weak, would be absolutely impractical because you necessarily would get hegemony by the stronger cities—or again, to quote Hobbes, you would get a situation where the stronger cities would protect

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[xxvii] Thucydides 4.92.

[xxviii] Mussolini launched his notorious war of conquest in Ethiopia in October 1935.

[xxix] The Fashoda incident of 1898 was a flashpoint of British and French imperial rivalry in Africa, sparking a war scare resulting in a settlement that reaffirmed the status quo between the powers.

the weaker ones, and no protection without obedience. I mean, take the question up in any practical term, how large the contingents should be must be defined in some way: you can have it in a federal assembly where each state has the same vote, but then the states who have the strongest contingents and bring the greatest sacrifices might very well say that there must be a Security Council distinguished from the General Assembly which determines this kind of thing.

Student: [. . .]

LS: You mean in the dialogue between the Athenians and Melians. That is of course a most brutal statement of the imperialist principle, but that is not Thucydides speaking, that is the Athenians. And that can easily be refuted in itself, the whole statement of the Athenians, because this is the prelude to the Sicilian expedition—that is the next big event—and[10] you can say it leads to that. Here you have the principles of unmitigated and shameless imperialism: What does it lead to? The Sicilian disaster. A modern example, Napoleon, who acts on it: What did it lead to? The Russian [campaign of 1812-1813]. Thucydides's view is surely not identical with the views of the Athenians there, but somehow his view is also not identical with that of the Melians. This is clear. But this is exactly our question: Where does he stand?

Student: I would say that Thucydides's aim was to do justice to both Athens and Sparta. That is a very crude answer, but in a way this is indicated by his reference to his exile and that he was able to be an observer on both sides.

LS: Well, that would simply mean that he had access to information from the other side which he did not have on the [Athenian][xxx] side. I do not believe a man like Thucydides needed to be exiled in order to have that impartiality which is essential to an historian of his stature. The only point, I believe (we will come to that in chapter 26) [is that] he got something from the exile which he couldn't have had in Athens, and that was rest. Rest. I mean, no one would come any day to him while he was at work on his history and say you have to take another command in Thrace, or something. You know? That I think was the practical effect—

Student: [. . .]

LS: That would be the other big question one would have to bring up, since Thucydides doubtless preferred the highest development of the human mind rather than its stunting. He would have had a preference[11] [for] Athens on this ground to Sparta. That is exactly the point which we would have to bring together in the proper way with these initial reflections to see how a solid case for Athens, a limited case, is made by Thucydides. In other words, the connection between the relative mildness of the Athenians—you know, Mytilene, where the simple Athenian soldiers make this great effort either by rowing fast or by rowing slow in order to prevent butchery there. You know how this is connected with—what the root of that is. I mean, the root is obviously not the moderation as we find [it] in Sparta, the best in Sparta; it is something else.

[xxx] Strauss says "Spartan" where he means "Athenian."

Student: [. . .]

LS: That shows a complication, indeed. In other words, there is something in sheer strength in the vulgar sense—later we come back to that—and no belief in the victory of the good can do away with that. That is surely what Thucydides [. . .] but nevertheless the point which he makes is more subtle, namely, that Sicily was necessary—I mean, the disaster in Sicily was a necessary consequence not of the military impossibility of what Alcibiades had in mind but of the deeper deceits which made it almost inevitable that Alcibiades should get into trouble with the *demos*, should be called back. And then the generals there—and especially the leading general, Nicias—would not be capable of conducting a campaign of this difficulty. This is more I think the point. You see, even granted that the principles stated by the Athenians at Melos were true, there would still be the questions—can they be stated? Although the Athenians—which is important—do not state them in a public assembly, they say them in a relatively small group of the men of Melos. But even that—in other words, if you have lost your shame, you may be otherwise very clever, courageous, and all these qualities, is this not [. . .] I mean, for example, Alcibiades's private style of life: shameless. It was not entirely unreasonable of the Athenians to suspect [of] a man like Alcibiades that he was responsible for that scandal with the *hermai*. It was of course foolish of them in this situation to make him an enemy, but on the other hand Alcibiades had it coming. You know, Pericles was a respectable man in addition to being a very good general and military leader, and this was a very important point. Can you adhere to certain principles to the extent of professing them openly without bad consequences for your character, in both senses of the word character, for what you are and for what you are reputed to be?

Student: [. . .]

LS: That is a long question; I can only now say what I believe was the diagnosis of this situation by Plato. Precisely the very great stability, the solidity prevents change, you know. Given the volatility of the Athenians with all its unpleasant consequences, maybe it is more amenable to change. Plato's *Laws* deals in a way with this question: How to establish a more civilized order in a rather uncivilized Spartan or Cretan environment? And it is very interesting that the order established there is not an improved Spartan order but an improved old Athenian order. You see, that is complicated. There is a certain kind of political virtue—I mean not the highest, but this very solidity which the Spartans had—which, since it makes difficult all change, makes difficult also a change for the better.

Student: If the Spartans had lived up to their principles it would seem to be a possibility [. . .]

LS: Then we come into very deep waters, you see, when you think of—again I quote Plato at the end of the *Republic*, when he says that the fellow who comes from a very well-ordered *polis*, say, Sparta—that would be a likely suggestion in the *Republic* on the

basis of the evidence there—and when he comes to the choice of a new life after death, what does he choose? The life of a tyrant.[xxxi] This is not so simple.

Same Student: I'm not saying this in contradiction but in order to get some perspective on this: the suggestion that if your principles are realistic you should not necessarily state them, and on the other hand the suggestion that one of the virtues of the Athenians was that actions and words were integrated—

LS: You mean that they stated the principles by which they act. Sure, that was so striking in this first speech in Sparta, their frankness. But that also had this implication: they could afford to say that. But what they stated in Sparta was of course much milder than what they stated in Melos. And in Sparta the statement of these principles had a decent immediate purpose: by their frankness they showed that we can afford to say that. "We are a strong power. A war with Athens will not be a picnic." They stated these principles in order to dissuade the Spartans from starting the war. Whereas in the case of Melos, it was a kind of slitting the Melians' throats in speech before slitting them in deed. I mean, that, I think, is a great difference. The simple proof is the fact that the dialogue with the Melians is notorious in the world, and the speech of the Athenians in Sparta is not notorious because it contained much more reserve and restraint. And, as I said, also the purpose is [a] much more decent one.

[xxxi] *Republic* 619b-d.

Session 10: February 5, 1962
Book 5, chapters 1-57

Leo Strauss:[i] We have now this situation: Sparta and Athens, peace plus alliances. And then one sees an alliance between Sparta and Argos, which is of course anti-Spartan. And the problem, or overall issue, is: Should the Athenians ally themselves with Sparta for good, or with Argos? And that brings up another issue. Argos becomes a democracy, and that makes it easier for the Athenian democracy, you know, for well-known reasons. And the leading man of the Argive policy is Alcibiades; in the forty-third chapter here Alcibiades appears for the first time, and he will be the evil genius of Athenian policy for the duration of the Peloponnesian War, until for a moment some change of fortune makes him the savior of Athens.

There are a few points made by our speaker on which I have some comments. I think you are wrong when you say that there are no state slaves[1] in Athens.[ii]

Student: This was just a conjecture. It just seemed strange that there was a provision that the Athenians should help the Spartans if they had a slave uprising, and not vice versa.

LS: Very roughly, the proportion of the unfree population to the free population in Sparta was more unsatisfactory than in Athens, but there were state slaves. You remember well the mines, the silver mines of [Laurion] were farmed by [state slaves]. But that is a trivial point which we could look up anywhere in a dictionary. There are a few other points. First, regarding terms. You said a "synthetic peace." What does this mean? We have a much more beautiful expression, a much more telling expression today, thanks to the troubles we are in: the Cold War—with some shooting for good measure. That was one point, and the other: What did you mean by a "peace of expediency"?

Same Student: Well, the causes of the war had not been resolved, and they had to make peace because they were both in bad shape.

LS: In other words, no side was defeated. Good. I mean, I don't mean "peace of expediency" is good, but I would say "peace of compromise" instead of a peace imposed on a defeated enemy. That is a necessary distinction, but don't believe that a peace imposed may not have the seeds of future wars within it. That is a point here, how a new war grows out of the old war. That happens also in the case of complete defeat; for example, the tragic case of Germany in the First World War. The peace was imposed; the Germans had no say in the matter, no compromises, and this in fact led to the second war. So [a] compromise peace can be relatively stable, and an imposed peace relatively unstable. That is not the point. Why were the allies of Sparta not consulted regarding the

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[i] The transcriber notes: "Strauss begins this lecture by pointing out on the map the places mentioned in this book: Thrace, Athens, Argos—"the third power."

[ii] Strauss addresses a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

peace treaty? You mentioned the fact that Sparta did not consult her allies in making the peace treaty.

Same Student: I wondered about that. Thucydides didn't say anything about it.

LS: Yes, sure, these are the kinds of things that Thucydides frequently does not explain but which can easily be explained—I mean, just ordinary common sense, there is nothing very subtle about it.

Same Student: The allies would not have agreed to it.

LS: Sure, very simple, and of course that is not necessarily the solution to the problem, as is shown here. And the last point: what you said about Alcibiades and the Spartan ambassadors in Athens. If I understood you correctly, you made here a slip, a simple slip [and] not very important in view of our interests. But [what] the Spartan ambassadors said in the popular assembly in Athens—that they had no power—was untrue. They did have their power, but Alcibiades told them: If you deny having power, then I will help you. And of course it was a very dirty trick played by Alcibiades. He just wanted to sabotage the possible understanding between Sparta and Athens.

Same Student: I guess I read it incorrectly, then, because I thought he was doing all this in preparation—

LS: No no, he was anti-Spartan, and he tried to embroil Athens and Sparta again and make this new deal with Argos. And that was a very big idea—to have a continental ally, Argos, close to Sparta on the Peloponnesus—and it looked very beautiful. And one of the greatest difficulties in book 5—it cannot be settled on the basis of the first half—[is] why did nothing come out of Alcibiades's Argos policy? That is absolutely essential to know, because the failure, the unexplained failure, of Alcibiades's Argive policy is the cause for the Sicilian policy. You see Alcibiades was a very active man, a go-getter, and he had to do something big, and he tried first Argos. And Argos looked very well, and then Argos, in spite of all kinds of ups and downs, she remains an ally of Athens; but in spite of that success Alcibiades turns to Sicily, and the Argives are the allies of Athens during the Sicilian campaign. Why? He never explains it, but it is explained in the following step.

Student: The thing I didn't understand in this inquiry Alcibiades had in regard to the Spartan ambassadors: why couldn't the other man who had been present in this private session have, when Alcibiades said "Do you have full powers?" and the ambassadors said, "No we don't have full power"—there were other men present when they said they did have full powers—

LS: But the same trick which fooled the Spartan ambassadors fooled also the pro-Spartan Athenians. Really, the daily bread of politics. Alcibiades did not take his political and domestic enemies into his secrets. Things happen, and not only in Sparta and Athens.

Well, I would like to make further general remarks. I have come to the conclusion, which may be wrong, which may have to be revised, that the fifth book, the discussion of which we begin today, is truly the central book,[2] central not in—you know, the division into books is irrelevant, I will explain what I mean by that—but it is the center book, and most important revelations about the whole thing occur there in this least promising part, because these are the lean years where there is not really a hot or shooting war but a cold war. But let me remind you of a general question regarding the study of Thucydides. There are great incongruities there, contradictions even. For example, look at this judgment about Brasidas which our speaker reported—you know, that Brasidas was prompted by selfish motives. [This] is in a glaring contrast in a way with the description of Brasidas as the heroic, Achilles-like liberator of the Greeks, and many other things.

Now the common way of explaining these incongruities today is with reference[3] [to] Thucydides's development. He wrote the book[4] [over] many, many years—decades even—and he changed his mind. In other words, the same method which is applied in the case of Plato: one finds certain remarks, say, in the *Parmenides*, which don't jibe with the *Apology*. They would say: Well, that was written by the young Plato, and that was written by the middle-aged or old Plato. It is as easy as that. While in the case of Plato this is a mere hypothesis [because] there is no evidence, in the case of Thucydides there is some appropriateness, because he does say that he began to write the book immediately after the outbreak of the war. Now at that time he could not have known what happened later—I mean, that there would be a peace of Nicias, and that the war would last twenty-seven years, and all this kind of thing. And he could not know how long it would last and many other things, and of course he could not have known what we call the meaning of events until later—certain battles, whether it was of importance or unimportance would not appear immediately. He was bound to view the same things differently at different times. Pericles appeared in a different light after Cleon and Alcibiades had come to sight, and so on. In brief, that is the way in which people understand it: Thucydides wrote down what they call notes, and he integrated them afterward but the integration was insufficient. Death supervened, and other things. That is one approach.

But there is also another point which has to be considered, and which is much less considered, and that is the fact, also universally admitted, of his reserve. You know, he refrains from judging. I would raise this question: Is not the key to the understanding of the incongruities and obscurities [of] Thucydides's reserve, i.e., his intention, rather than accident, [i.e.], that he couldn't finish it and that the notes were of different origin? Both views, to begin with, are equally hypothetical. We do not know. The fact that the first hypothesis, the developmental one, agrees with the habits of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of course does not prove that it is intrinsically superior. The second hypothesis, that which starts from deliberation or intention, has this advantage: even on the basis of the first hypothesis—a development—the incongruity must be proven. In order that someone in a very lazy mood reads two passages and says that they contradict each other, that of course won't do; it must be established in a thorough manner. In other words, the burden of proof rests on him who asserts that there is an incongruity, and that would be admitted by everyone. But this has a crucial implication: in all sober proceedings we assume that there no incongruities, or that the text is perfect, and therefore the burden of

proof rests on him who says that the text is not perfect in one way or another. But then we find it imperfect, then it doesn't make sense; for example, then it means that the text—or in more complicated cases where the text cannot be amended, we explain the incongruity by referring to development. Thucydides said in a clear statement A is B, and in another clear statement that A is non-B, then you say: Well, that is the way it looked around 420, and that is the way things looked around 404, or whatever the case may be.

In some cases a more careful reflection shows that the incongruity is only apparent. In the following six lines we are led to prefer heuristically, provisionally, the hypothesis that all the incongruities are merely apparent, or are intentional. I hope I can show this today by discussing the difficulties one encounters in chapters 14 to 17, and chapter 29 of the fifth book. But let us now first begin with the beginning.

Now the fifth book begins by describing an act of Athenian piety. No political reason is hinted at. It is perhaps connected, as a similar story told in book 3, chapter 104, with the plague—the Athenians had to appease Apollo. The year which begins at the beginning of book 5 is the only year which begins with a religious act, an act of piety. All books begin with political or military acts, except—or years, because the books we must discount—the sixth year and the eighth year begin with an earthquake, or eclipse, respectively, i.e., with natural phenomena. So we have here year six, year eight, year ten—the only years beginning not with political or military events, and the order is natural phenomenon; natural phenomenon; an act of piety.

Thucydides then turns to discussing Cleon's great success at Torone. In the absence of Brasidas, however, the true antagonist. Brasidas's misfortune—that he is not there at the right moment—resembles that of Thucydides, you know. He just comes a bit too late, and, which is perhaps more important, Cleon, after he won this victory, does not butcher the citizens of Torone. This victory and the use of the victory makes, I think, the most glorious page in the annals of Cleon. Thucydides doesn't stress these things, not because he is angry at Cleon and had an axe to grind against him—you know, some commentators say he is very unfair to Cleon. I don't think in a case like [that of] a man like Thucydides such explanations are possible, because his narrative makes it perfectly clear that this was an excellent job done by Cleon.

Next we find the Athenians sending an unsolicited ambassador to Leontini in Sicily to prepare help for the demos in Leontini. We see here where foreign and domestic politics come together, as we have on some other occasions before. And this interest of Athens, or of the Leontines in Athens had something to do with the growing strength of Syracuse. In Sicilian politics, Syracuse plays a similar role to Athens in mainland politics—you know, the other cities get frightened. Nothing comes out of that very inconsiderable success but a foreshadowing, as we have plainly seen, of the later Sicilian expedition. Cleon will return to Thrace. Cleon's base for the conquest of Amphipolis is Eion. Do you know what Eion means? What it signifies for us as Thucydides fans, if I may say so?

Student: He had saved it.

LS: Sure, you see that is the vindication of Thucydides. The whole campaign would not be possible but for Thucydides's actions. Then there comes the battle of Amphipolis. Brasidas has a sound estimate of what Cleon would do, that is to say, what Cleon would be compelled to do. That is the greatest sign of strategic intelligence. The splendid example in the Second World War is that of Lord Montgomery, who had the photo of Rommel on his desk and deciphered Rommel by looking at him, and of course also from what he knew that Rommel had done, and that led to his first defeat prior to El Alamein. [. . .] which I learned from some expert was the true downfall of Rommel, [El Alamein] was a foregone conclusion afterwards.[iii] In other words, Brasidas discerns the causes of Cleon's conduct, and therewith he defeated him. Thucydides states these causes in chapter 7 without making clear whether they were the causes guessed by Brasidas—that would need some study on our part.

Now let us turn to chapter 7, after the beginning, because this remark is of some importance because it elucidates post-Periclean Athens. Chapter 7—will you read it, please, whoever has it?

Reader:
Cleon for a while lay still, but was afterwards forced to do as was expected by Brasidas.

LS: You know, he was forced to do it; Brasidas's expectation was based on a realization of what will force Cleon to do it, so that way he could be certain of it.

Reader:
For the soldiers being angry with their stay there, and recounting with themselves what a command his would be, and with what ignorance and cowardice against what skill and boldness of the other—

LS: Who's the one and who's the other? Who has the experience and daring, and who has the ignorance and softness? The first is Brasidas. In other words, the soldiers say: Well, look at such a general as the enemy has, he has the experience and the daring—the Spartan leader has the daring, contrary to all that we know about the difference between Sparta and Athens—and our leader is inept, and a coward, a softy. Cleon a softy—interesting. This, people say, shows the terrible prejudice of Thucydides against Cleon, but Thucydides doesn't speak in his own name; that is what the Athenian soldiers say.

Reader:
and how they came forth with him against their wills, he perceived their muttering, and being unwilling to offend them with so long a stay in one place, dislodged and led them forward. And he took the same course there, which having succeeded well before at Pylus gave him cause to think himself to have some judgment. For he thought not that any body

[iii] Strauss's inaudible reference was presumably to the Battle of Alam el Halfa (August 30-September 3, 1942) which weakened Rommel's forces before the Second Battle of El Alamein, fought in late October. There the Allies led by Montgomery inflicted a crushing defeat on Rommel, compelling him to withdraw from Egypt and Libya to the borders of Tunisia and ending the Axis threat to the Middle East.

would come forth to give him battle, and gave out he went up principally to see the place, and stayed for greater forces, not to secure him in case he should be compelled to fight, but that he might therewith environ the city on all sides at once, and in that manner take it by force. So he went up and set his army down on a strong hill before Amphipolis, standing himself to view the fens of the river Strymon and the situation of the city towards Thrace—

LS: Now I didn't hear that. What was the verb here, the principal verb in this sentence? "To view," yes, and this word occurs here for the third time. Cleon, then, goes out to see—but it is a very emphatic word in Greek, "to see a show," "to look at." Cleon the contemplator—a nasty joke of Thucydides. Cleon engaged in contemplation, and that of course leads to his ruin.

That we will come to in the sequel. Because, as you will see immediately afterward, in chapter 9 we have a speech of Brasidas addressed to his soldiers. And Cleon, who is in much greater need, does not address his soldiers. Cleon does not speak. The Spartan speaks; the Athenian does not speak. Now that is of course a big joke, but what does it bespeak that Cleon does not speak?

Student: The irony is of course that Cleon is speaking to the Athenians and saying that they have got to stop talking and act.

LS: Very good. In other words, his contempt for speech, his contempt for speech contributes to his decisive defeat; and instead of speaking, however, since the intellectual life of men cannot be completely destroyed even in Cleon, then he becomes a silent contemplator. I think that is the most nasty thing Thucydides does to Cleon.

Student: [. . .] Athenians must act and not discuss it too far. Now he comes face-to-face with a situation which he doesn't contemplate in the sense that he knows what is going on, but [. . .].

LS: Yes, but by this fact, that is developed [. . .] By this fact he reveals to Brasidas completely the strength of this army and his plan, and so Brasidas, with his much inferior army, relatively inferior army, inflicted a decisive defeat on the Athenians.

Student: You say that the Greek word implies contemplation. Does it carry also the meaning of a useless contemplation, or—

LS: No, the most simple is a spectacle, or to view a procession, a religious procession—an object of show—I mean, you look at it and are thrilled by the mere looking. Theater is derived from the word.[iv]

Now Brasidas addresses his army. I will give you the gist: "You know your superiority to these Ionians, you sturdy Dorians. But their conduct shows that they now regard us as inferior. It is on this error of theirs that my plan is based, and my plan is a noble theft—

[iv] As is *theōria,* the term for contemplation in thinkers from Plato onward.

which corresponds to a noble lie, you know, meaning noble because it is for a good cause." Theft is also advisedly used because the Spartans are said to have trained their young boys in stealing. There is a beautiful story in Xenophon, in the *Anabasis*, about that. You know, the Spartans learned to steal, and there is the famous story of the boy who stole a fox, I believe it was, and he was bitten by the fox and did not reveal his pain, and he died.[v] That was Spartan discipline. So the Spartans learned to steal, and here the greatest Spartan, Brasidas, gives us a beautiful example of a most successful theft. Now he mentions of course what is at stake: liberty or slavery, the famous line of Brasidas's liberation policy. Brasidas acts on the principle that *logos*, the understanding of what the general needs to do, will make the soldiers better fighters. That is what Pericles had said, you remember, in his funeral speech; it is done here by a Spartan, not by an Athenian. Brasidas, fighting bravely, dies, and Thucydides describes how he is honored after death. He is honored as a hero, as a superhuman being. But where? In the Peloponnesus? [No.] By the people who benefited in Thrace, not in Sparta.[vi]

Cleon also falls. The situation which is created by battle: the desire for peace in both Athens and Sparta, and Sparta is especially interested in making peace, because the truce or peace—you know they didn't make peace in Greece as we make peace: when peace is made in the West now it means perpetual peace; the Greeks were in a way more honest, they made peace only for some time—long times, fifty years. But the peace with Argos was expiring and it was certain that there would be a Spartan–Argive war, and that was a further inducement for the Spartans to make peace. These motives were apparently not as strong as they were before when a year's truce was made. That would have been too [. . .]

Now let us turn—this is told by Thucydides in chapter 14, and there he gives first a description of the reasons why the Athenians and then why the Spartans wished peace. Now for some reason the Spartan motives are particularly important, and I think that we should read them. The middle of chapter 14.

Reader:
and the Lacedaemonians on the other side did desire peace because the war had not proceeded as they expected; for they had thought they should in a few years have warred down the power of Athens by wasting their territory—

LS: That was of course the figuring of the war party, not of good old King Archidamus, who told them it would be a very very long war.

Reader:
and because they were fallen into that calamity in the island, the like whereof had never happened unto Sparta before; because also their country was continually ravaged by those of Pylus and Cythera—

LS: Those are two islands, or rather Pylos the fortification and the city, and Cythera the island.

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[v] Strauss misremembers: the source of this famous anecdote is Plutarch *Life of Lycurgus*18.1.
[vi] And therefore not in the Peloponnesus.

Reader:
and their Helotes continually fled to the enemy; and because they feared lest those which remained, trusting in them that were run away, should in this estate of their raise some innovation—

LS: Innovation means of course to make a rebellion, sedition.

Reader:
as at other times before they had done. Withal it happened that the thirty years' peace with the Argives was now upon the point of expiring; and the Argives would not renew it without restitution made them of Cynuria; so that to war against the Argives and the Athenians, both at once, seemed impossible. They suspected also that some of the cities of Peloponnesus would revolt to the Argives, as indeed it came afterwards to pass.[vii]

LS: These are very powerful motives, you must admit, for making peace. Now let us go on.

Reader:
These things considered, it was by both parts thought good to conclude a peace, but especially by the Lacedaemonians for the desire they had to recover their men taken in the island. For the Spartans that were amongst them were both of the prime men of the city and their kinsmen. And therefore they began to treat presently after they were taken; but the Athenians, by reason of their prosperity, would not lay down the war at that time on equal terms.

LS: Prosperity meaning the success in Pylos.

Reader:
But after their defeat at Delium the Lacedaemonians, knowing they would be apter now to accept it, made that truce for a year, during which they were to meet and consult about a longer time.[viii]

LS: Yes, now what do you say to this, after having read chapter 14 and now chapter 15? I mean very obvious things. In chapter 14 he has given the reasons why the Spartans wanted peace, and now he repeats it—I mean, the repetition is shorter, much shorter, but it is still a repetition of the same thing. What is the difference? There is a difference in these two statements about why the Spartans want peace.

Student: The getting back of the key citizens was an immediate good that they wanted to achieve, and the negotiation for a permanent peace [. . .] but the immediate good that they wanted was the restoration of their leading citizens.

[vii] Thucydides 5.14.
[viii] Thucydides 5.15.

LS: Yes, but still, if you compare it to the preceding chapter, he gives the reasons why both the Athenians and the Spartans wanted peace. Here he gives only the reasons why the Spartans wanted peace. In the preceding chapter, in other words, he acts impartially: these were the Athenians' [reasons], these were the Spartans'. Now he gives only the Spartan reasons. I disregard now the difference of context, but this is the striking thing. I suggest this: he is speaking now from the Spartan point of view and is no longer speaking from a broad—I think this sentence will be important for the sequel. Now how does he go on here?

Reader:
But when also this other overthrow happened to the Athenians at Amphipolis, and that both Cleon and Brasidas were slain, the which on either side were most opposite to the peace, the one for that he had good success and honour in the war, the other because in quiet times his evil actions would more appear and his—[ix]

LS: And so on. Let us forget about that. I think that explains the difference of the treatment of Brasidas in the eulogy of Brasidas, in the two eulogies of Brasidas, given by Thucydides and the statement made here. From the point of view of Sparta, the alleged motive which was so powerful in the mouth of Brasidas, the liberation of the Greeks, had completely disappeared. There is complete silence about this war cause here, and now you look at it from the point of the peace-desiring Spartan. Brasidas was against the peace. Why was he against the peace? The liberation of the Greeks? No! He has risen to a position to which he would never have risen except through his military success.

The motive of the Spartans is allowed then to be the return of the *hombres* who were captured in Sphacteria. The fears of the helots and of the simultaneous war with Athens and the Argives and so on are dismissed. And it is furthermore said that the Spartans were responsible for the one year's truce, which does not jibe with what was said in book 4, chapter 117, where there was no emphasis on the Spartans as the prime mover. He looks at it now for a moment from a Spartan point of view. And I said, this denigration of Brasidas, we can say it is part of the Spartan official version—you know, Brasidas had to be debunked, Brasidas with his noble war policies, the liberation of Greece—had to be debunked. The Spartan version is now no longer, of course, that the war was waged on behalf of Greek liberty. Now after having accepted this Spartan psychology regarding Brasidas, Thucydides applies himself to the leaders of the peace and war parties in the two cities, and he gives the selfish reasons of Cleon, and then he gives the selfish reasons of the peace party leader Pleistoanax in Sparta, and [of] Nicias in Athens. There is a little thing to which I draw your attention without trying to interpret it. When you look at the beginning of chapter 16, he says Cleon and Brasidas, in this order, but then he speaks first of Brasidas and then of Cleon. And he does the same thing later when he speaks of the peace party—Pleistoanax and Nicias, and he speaks first of Nicias, and then of Pleistoanax. He changes it. The general rule in such matters—I don't dare to say that it must be [. . .] is that [when] two things are interchanged, they are interchangeable, and that means there is a point of view, a point of view from which they appear interchangeable; and that means of course from a very high point of view where these

[ix] Thucydides 5.16.1.

enormous differences between Brasidas and Cleon, and between Pleistonanax and Nicias, would cease to be important. This is an indication, I believe, of Thucydides's ultimate point of view. But let us see what he says about the leaders of the war party. Drop five lines or so to where he speaks of Nicias.

Reader:
Nicias, the son of Niceratus, who in military charges had been the most fortunate of his time, did most of all other desire to have the peace go forward. Nicias because he was desirous, having hitherto never been overthrown, to carry his good fortune through and to give both himself and the city rest from their troubles—[x]

LS: Both himself and his fellow citizens—he is not so selfish.

Student: But himself comes first . . .

LS: Yes, but he thinks also of the others. Brasidas is not presented as having thought of the others, nor is Cleon, nor Pleistoanax. Nicias is the most moral general in the whole book, as we will see later, and that is indicated here. Now go on.

Reader:
for the present, and for the future to leave a name that in all his time he had never made the commonwealth miscarry; which he thought might be done by standing out of danger and by putting himself as little as he might into the hands of fortune; and to stand out of danger is the benefit of peace. Pleistoanax had the same desire because of the imputation laid upon him about his return from exile by his enemies, that suggested unto the Lacedaemonians upon every loss they received that the same befell them for having, contrary to law, repealed his banishment.

LS: You see the Spartans thought that the illegal calling back of Pleistoanax was the cause of their defeats. They believed in the power of law.

Reader:
For they charged him further that he and his brother Aristocles had suborned the prophetess of Delphi to answer the deputies of the Lacedaemonians, when they came thither, most commonly with this: that they should bring back the seed of the semigod, the son of Jupiter, out of strange country into his own; and that if they did not, they should plough their land with a silver plough—

LS: That is of course the Spartan king, the descendant of Heracles, son of Zeus.

Reader:
and so at length to have made the Lacedaemonians, nineteen years after, with such dances and sacrifices as they who were the first founders of Lacedaemon had ordained to be used at the enthroning of their kings, to fetch him home again; who lived in the meantime in exile in the mountain Lycaeum, in a house whereof the one half was part of the temple of

[x] Thucydides 5.16.1.

Jupiter, for fear of the Lacedaemonians, as being suspected to have taken a bribe to withdraw his army out of Attica.[xi]

LS: Read the beginning of chapter 17.

Reader:
Being troubled with these imputations and considering with himself, there being no occasion of calamity in time of peace and the Lacedaemonians thereby recovering their men, that he also should cease to be obnoxious to the calumniations of his enemies whereas, in war, such as had charge could not but be quarrelled upon their losses—he was therefore forward to have the peace concluded.

LS: You see Pleistoanax has also simply selfish motives. The only man who has a motive which is at least partly unselfish is Nicias. Now there are quite a few things that you have to consider here: Nicias's fear of future misfortune; and he is concerned with preserving his fame gained in war, hence he desires a situation without danger, i.e., peace. And of course poor Nicias will be driven later on by his abomination of Alcibiades to undergo the greatest danger, much greater danger than he had undergone ever [before], by becoming a commander in Sicily and perishing there miserably. We will see that later.

Now there are a few other points. You see also [that] the whole point of view here is fundamentally Spartan. I will explain what I mean by that. When he describes the story of the king Pleistoanax, the difference in fact reveals to us the Spartan view of the Delphian oracle. Even the Spartans are not always sure Apollo is with them, but in this case they are very sure that the prophetess suborned by the Spartan king and his brother had led them on. Here the Spartans do not trust the oracle, and we may add that perhaps they were not so sure that the oracle according to which Apollo would help them—[whether] called or not called, you remember—was so reliable; perhaps that was also something which the prophetess suborned by Spartan authorities had said. You see, he reveals here to us in a way more of Sparta than he ever did before. And you see also another point which we must consider. The Spartans are here said to have traced the defeat—to the extent to which they gave a religious interpretation to the defeat—to this illegal act of suborning the priestess in Delphi, the prophetess in Delphi. They do not yet say a word that their misfortunes would be due to their breach of peace, the breach of the oath to keep the truce, you remember that. Only later on in the seventh book do we learn that the Spartans had an uneasy conscience because of their breach of the truce.

Right then comes the truce between Athens and Sparta in chapter 18, and the latent conflict describes visibly, as our speaker has shown, no stable peace, but I would definitely add one little point to the speaker, unless Sparta and Athens have learned their lesson: that these loose threats are not good enough reasons for a devastating war. This can of course happen, but that perhaps expects too much.

Now let us turn to the beginning of chapter 20. You see here in the case of these truces and treaties Thucydides gives them verbatim; the speeches are not given verbatim, he

[xi] Thucydides 5.16.2-3.

always says they said something like that. Here, he says, is the text. And now, afterwards in chapter 20—will you read it?

Reader:
This peace was made in the very end of winter and the spring then beginning presently after the City Bacchanals and (full) ten years and some few days over after the first invasion of Attica and the beginning of this war.

LS: Period. What was the beginning of this war? Repeat like a good boy, what is that? Answer: The first invasion of Attica. Who had done that? Answer: The Spartans. Who began the war? The Spartans. What did we learn at the beginning of book 2, where the beginning of the war was described?

Student: The Thebans' invasion of Plataea.

LS: Sure. In a very good contemporary commentary[5] I read that this is the most difficult passage in the whole book.[xii] It is certainly worth consideration. What is behind that contradiction? Did the Thebans start the war or did the Spartans start the war? Both imply, of course, that the Athenians did not start the war. From a legal point of view, the Athenians were just. Let us never forget that. But what is behind this issue? Did the Thebans start the war, or did the Spartans start the war? That we must try to understand. In other words, I am not satisfied with the fact that Thucydides, when he wrote the beginning of book 2 was of this opinion, while in book 5 he was of another opinion.

Well, the Thebans were abominable people; we loathe them, naturally. But from the point of view of law, their act was not clearly illegal because of this little complication that the leading men of Plataea had called them in. You see there is always this interesting difficulty, because the trouble is you have not merely the cities, you have also within the city the two factions, the rich and the poor, or however you call them. And it is not so settled which of these factions is the city. You know? Well, in our recent daily papers, you know, what is the government of China, and some other places where we do not know?[xiii] And people who may be today simply jailbirds, if not worse, may tomorrow be the government. It is a very hard question. But if you look at it with some detachment, it is even funny, but it surely creates a difficulty. And that the Thebans committed an illegal act is not so clear. But that the Spartans committed an illegal act is fully clear. Tat is very important.

In the light of what we have observed in chapter 15, you know what I mean—it repeats the question of why did the Spartans wish to have peace. And if we take it together with this, we see that Thucydides gradually divulges the Spartan defects. That is the first time that by implication—it is not explicitly stated, we have to figure it out—[it is stated] that the Spartans' war was unjust.

[xii] Presumably the reference is to Gomme, whose commentary had appeared not long before these lectures.

[xiii] Strauss here alludes to the fact that at the time (1962) the United States did not yet recognize the regime in Beijing as the legitimate government of China. That would not happen until 1979.

You remember the general argument which I started last time: the overall judgments of Thucydides—the praise of Sparta, you know. The most comprehensive praise of Sparta occurs, so to say, at the beginning and at the end, books 1 and 8. But we are not yet at book 8, we will only move toward book 8. In the beginning, the two statements on Sparta in the Archaeology; no praise of Athens in the Archaeology can possibly be compared with that praise of Sparta. And then his great praise of Sparta in book 2, chapters 8 to 9: Sparta was universally popular in Greece because she was regarded as the liberator of the Greeks from the tyrant city Athens. [Do] you remember that? Then in book 3, chapter 82, the list of values, as they would say today, in which the emphasis is all on the Spartan values. You know that is an implicit praise of Sparta too, and quite a few other things. The praise of Sparta, to exaggerate a bit, occurs in books 1 and 8, and the defect of Sparta, its greatest defect, injustice—I mean, we know the others which are not legally so tangible, like killing prisoners of war and this kind of thing—they are in the center of the book.

Now there are two reasons for that, I believe. In the first place, Thucydides is not an accuser like Cleon or like the Corinthians in Sparta. For it would be too easy for an Athenian to be an accuser of Sparta; and just [as] from the highest point of view[6] an Athenian will not praise Athenians in front of Athenians—that is what Plato says in *Menexenus* is easy[xiv]—he also will not accuse the Spartans in front of an Athenian audience. It may be politically necessary, that is another matter; but this is not a political pamphlet, it is a book written as a possession for all times.

There is another reason why this pro-Spartan bias, this deliberate pro-Spartan bias which is not the last word of Thucydides, plays such a role in the foreground, and that is the link-up between Sparta and moderation. I mean, if you say "moderation" you make clearest to the meanest capacities—if I may use this old-fashioned expression—what you mean by saying[7] [that you] like Sparta. Of course they have made all kinds of mistakes, but basically they are sound; that is that point. Now let me pursue the narrative, but let me only add one point. I mean, if we are not falsely sophisticated but docile, but willing to contradict—that is I think the proper posture for the reading of such a man. On necessary provocation, willing to contradict, but first [to] listen.

Now when he begins his book, in the very beginning, he challenges all traditional views. The old ones: the ancestors were weak, we are on the top of the world. Not only were they weak in arms and wealth, they were weak also in their minds. What they say, and what the greatest men of olden times like Homer say about the Trojan War, for example, it is just fables, fairy tales. So he breaks [with] this most respected, most powerful opinion, but he establishes a counterweight to that right in this very context, and that is the pro-Spartan statement. Because Sparta is of course the old-fashioned city, versus modern, daring Athens. You see, so one can say that the pro-Spartan opinion is a provisional substitute for the oldest view. This pro-Spartan view will of course have to be revised too.

[xiv] Plato *Menexenus* 235d.

Now let us go on. The Spartans are earnest about the peace. In order to overcome the difficulties which are made by the allies, they make an alliance with the Athenians—this was only a truce. Then the text of the treaty follows, and our speaker has said already this strange reservation regarding Sparta which has no parallel regarding Athens, the famous helot problem—you know the trouble of Sparta with the helots and the slave population. The Athenians didn't have a difficulty of this kind. And in the third chapter you see towards the end how these pillars on which the text is to be inscribed will be established in Sparta with Apollo, in Athens with Athena. I mean, Apollo is more emphatically the Spartan god—he is of course worshiped also in Athens—and Athena [is] more entirely the Athenian goddess; and therefore this great paradox that Brasidas sacrifices to Athena, you know, in the context of Thucydides, not in the Melian story.[xv]

The peace proves to be uneasy. After six years and ten months both Athens and Sparta were compelled to engage again in hot war, as is said at the end of chapter 26. You recall that in the parallel, in chapter 23 of the first book, Thucydides had said only of the Spartans that they were compelled by the Athenians to engage in war. Now he says—the Athenians say, of course: Well, we were compelled, you know, we had to; the Persian War, you defected. You know the famous story. But this is important: this was not said by Thucydides; that was said by the Athenians and to some extent supported by Thucydides's narrative, but not clearly said. Now he says that in the second part of the war both Sparta and Athens were compelled, i.e., both were equally just. In the first case it was said [that] Sparta was compelled, i.e., Athens was not compelled. [8]Sparta was just; Athens was not just. Well, now both are compelled. The scales [are] raised in favor of the Athenians. This shows again the progress in the almost explicit criticism of Sparta. And here we have reached the end of the first war, i.e., from 431 to 421, and the transition to the second which begins in all its glory only in 415. There are six years and 10 months of cold war. We have to read chapter 26. Will you begin at the beginning?

Reader:
This also hath the same Thucydides of Athens written from point to point, by summers and winters, as everything came to pass, until such time as the Lacedaemonians and their confederates had made an end of the Athenian dominion and had taken their long walls and Piraeus.

LS: In other words this is a clear proof that Thucydides survived the end of the war in 404.

Reader:
To which time, from the beginning of the war, it is in all twenty seven years. As for the composition between, if any man think it not to be accounted with the war, he shall think amiss. For let him look into the actions that passed as they are distinctly set down and he shall find that that deserveth not to be taken for a peace, in which they neither rendered all nor accepted all, according to the articles. Besides, in the Mantinean and the Epidaurian wars and in other actions, it was on both sides infringed—

[xv] This reference to the "Melian story" is obscure: one suspects a transcriber's error.

LS: On both sides. Clearly it is not [any] longer a question of the superior justice of Sparta.

Reader:
moreover, the confederates on the borders of Thrace continued in hostility as before; and the Boeotians had but a truce from one ten days to another. So that with the first ten years' war, and with this doubtful cessation, and the war that followed after it, a man shall find, counting by the times, that it came to just so many years and some few days, and that those who built upon the prediction of the oracles have this number only to agree.

LS: In other words, this is the only clear oracle which was confirmed: that the war would last twenty-seven years.

Reader:
And I remember yet that from the very beginning of this war and so till the end it was uttered by many that it should be of thrice nine years' continuance.

LS: In other words, he almost reproduces the oracular formula for which "twenty seven" would be too crude—you know, "nine times three" is more oracular.

Reader:
And for the time thereof I lived in my strength and applied my mind to gain an accurate knowledge of the same. It happened also that I was banished my country for twenty years, after my charge at Amphipolis—

LS: That is to say, from 422 to 423—I don't know the exact date; until seven years after the end of the war.[xvi]

Reader:
whereby being present at the affairs of both, and especially of the Lacedaemonians by reason of my exile, I could at leisure the better learn the truth of all that passed.[xvii]

LS: Yes, but "at leisure" is translated more literally "in rest." In the first half of the war Thucydides was in motion—you remember, he was a general. In the second half of the war he was at rest. In the first half of the war—now let us see how this works out. Thucydides says that apparently there were two wars, but in fact it was one war. Just as the same Thucydides who wrote the whole war is one man, the war is one war. Yet the war consists of two parts undeniably, [and] so does Thucydides's life: prior to the exile and in exile. In the first part he was on the Athenian side; in the second part—with a slight exaggeration—he was on the Spartan side, as he says. In the first part he was on the side of motion; in the second part he was on the side of rest, if you remember that Sparta has kinship with rest and Athens with motion.

[xvi] Amphipolis fell in the winter of the eight year of the war (424-423 BCE), so if Thucydides was exiled for twenty years, that term would have expired in 403, just a year after the end of the war.
[xvii] Thucydides 5.26.

In a way, very strangely, Thucydides moves from Athens to Sparta. There is, in other words, both a movement from Athens to Sparta and a movement from Sparta to Athens, and as in a way we have seen all the time, we have[9] [had] that experience. Up to a point we were passionately pro-Spartan because they weren't so nasty. Then there came shocking things, and we took the Athenian side. We move back and forth—I mean, what happened to us was done in a simple and symbolic way once by Thucydides. One could also put it this way. In the first part of the war, in the strict sense of justice the Spartans were unjust: they broke the treaty. The Athenians were just, and Thucydides was on the side of justice. So he was in the second part, where the Athenians were unjust and the Spartans were just—so he moved to the side of justice. These are not altogether playful things, I believe.

So let us come now to the story. We cannot read everything; in chapter 32, he describes the action of the Athenians in Scione in Thrace, where—perhaps you will read the beginning of chapter 32.

Reader:
About the same time of this summer the Athenians expunged Scione, slew all that were within it at man's estate, made slaves of the women and children, and gave their territory to the Plataeans.

LS: In other words, the Plataeans had lost their city.

Reader:
They also replanted the Delians in Delos, both in consideration of the defeats they had received after their expulsion, and also because the oracle at Delphi had commanded it.

LS: Not precisely, because the god in Delphi had commanded it. You see, the Athenians committed first a very cruel and at the same time a pious act. Their misfortune reminds them of their sin to Apollo, or to Apollo's favorites, the Delians.

Now then the friction between Sparta and Athens: the Athenians proved to be more accommodating than the Spartans, but in Sparta the war party is then victorious. There is a danger of a Spartan–Boeotian–Corinthian–Argive alignment against Athens. Nothing comes out of it for the time being. The Argives are afraid of a possible Athenian–Spartan–Boeotian alignment being brought about. Well, this is all contemporary history. They try to bring about, therefore, an understanding of their own with Sparta. Some Athenians are disappointed with Sparta's conduct [and] turn their minds to war, especially Alcibiades. He makes here his entry, in chapter 43. His motives for turning to Argos are described there, and let us only read the beginning, the second sentence:

Reader:

Amongst the rest was Alcibiades, the son of Clinias, a man, though young in years, yet in the dignity of his ancestors honoured as much as any man of what city soever. Who was of opinion that it was better to join with the Argives, not only for the matter itself—[xviii]

LS: You see, that is important. Alcibiades had two motives: a decent motive—it is better for Athens to be allied with Argos against Sparta; and then his private motives, mentioned below. He comes into conflict with Nicias, who prefers the Spartan alliance, whereas Alcibiades prefers the anti-Spartan alliance. Through the action of the anti-Athenians in Sparta, Alcibiades succeeds in getting a treaty of alliance between Athens and Argos. Thucydides describes then, in chapters 49 to 50, how the political dissensions affect the Olympian games. He doesn't say how it affects any of the music things; he speaks only of the gymnastic things. But we know from the daily papers that cultural exchange will be affected if gymnastic exchange [. . .]

Chapter 53 is of interest—I mean, from our very selective point of view.

Reader:
The same summer fell out a war between the Epidaurians and the Argives; the pretext thereof was about a beast for sacrifice, which the Epidaurians ought to have sent in consideration of their pastures to Apollo Pythius, and had not done it, the Argives being the principal owners of the temple. But Alcibiades and the Argives had indeed determined to take in the city, though without pretence at all, both—[xix]

LS: You see, there was a pretence there, but Alcibiades, at least among others, did not regard that as necessary. It foreshadows later developments, where—for example, the discussion in Melos. We don't have to read this; we cannot read all these things. We turn to the next chapter then.

Reader:
About the same time also the Lacedaemonians, with their whole forces, came forth as far as Leuctra, in the confines of their own territory towards Lycaeum, under the conduct of Agis, the son of Archidamus, their king.[xx]

LS: In other words, this nice old gentleman is dead by now—Archidamus.

Reader:
No man knew against what place they intended the war; no, not the cities themselves out of which they were levied. But when in the sacrifices which they made for their passage the tokens observed were unlucky, they went home again and sent word about to their confederates (being now the month Carneius) to prepare themselves, after the next feast of the new moon (kept by the Dorians), to be again upon their march. The Argives, who set forth the twenty-sixth day of the month before Carneius, though they celebrated the same day, yet all the time they continued invading and wasting Epidauria. And the

[xviii] Thucydides 5.43.
[xix] Thucydides 5.53.
[xx] Thucydides 5.53.

Epidaurians called in their confederates to help them, whereof some excused themselves upon the quality of the month; and others came but to the confines of Epidauria and there stayed.

LS: Now let us stop here for a moment. It was part of the Spartan law that before they crossed the border in a campaign certain special sacrifices were to be made, and if they were not favorable, the campaign was off. This ritual connected with the crossing the frontiers, [*ta diabatēria*] has not been mentioned before. Here in this section it is mentioned frequently. I have not noted statistics, but easily three or four times, and as far as I remember, never mentioned before. Now one must raise the question: Were the sacrifices invariably favorable when they invaded Attica in the first war? One must assume that; at least Thucydides doesn't say a word about it. Now that has something to do with what I said previous to now: more things revealing Sparta, comparatively speaking, then ever before. You see, the considerations which affect the Spartans, which are conducive to making them so slow because of these ritual impediments, do not affect, as we have seen here, the enemies of Sparta, the Argives.

A brief survey of what follows in the sequel. Alcibiades alleges that the truce between Athens and Sparta has been broken by Sparta. This decision in the Athenian assembly is taken at the instigation of Argos. In other words, Argos is trying to drive Athens into war, just as Corcyra at the very beginning was trying to do that. The Athenians reoccupy Pylos, and hot war between Sparta and Argos issues,[10] with Athens as an ally of Argos. The battle shapes up and it seems to be surely[11] an Argive defeat. But then two Argive leaders start negotiations, negotiations with the Spartan king in command, Agis. The Athenians had not come; the Athenians come afterward, but with a small force only, so there is here a difficulty. Still, the Athenians, Argos and Mantineia, this alliance remains intact and makes no military moves—practically open war against Sparta. The consequences in Sparta are worth considering. Chapter 63, is this included in our assignment for today?

Student: My section ended with chapter 57.

LS: Oh, then we trespass on the field of the next speaker. I will not say any further word about that. Let me see now, there are a few points which I thought I could mention. Perhaps I will make this more general point again in connection with the beginning, what I said in the beginning. That is again a remark of the kind which a former speaker would call methodological, but they are necessary remarks because they accompany substantive studies; they do not precede substantive studies. Now the point which I have always made and which I repeat again is that we must start from the surface, from what is manifestly there and not from things which we imagine or guess or hypothesize. And that means in the case of a book we must start from what Thucydides clearly says. In simple language: Don't try to be clever. See what is there; that is elementary. But then we must make an addition which we do not have to make in many books, in fact in most scholarly books, although it happens from time to time due to disgraceful blunders (anything can happen), but it would not happen to a man of simple common sense. We must start from what Thucydides clearly says in his own name. In other words, if a speaker says

something, and especially if it is a very beautiful and persuasive statement, everyone is inclined to think, "He can't but have meant that." But we don't know. A statement may be very persuasive and very beautifully expressed and still not true, or at least not true in the author's view. The very persuasiveness of many of Thucydides's speeches obscures for the superficial reader the difference between the characters and Thucydides himself. That is the true dangerous pitfall.

So it is not so easy to start from the surface, as it seems when one hears this word. We are always superficial—including everyone, including even the very great men; that is essential to man's nature. But to be superficial and to start from the surface are two different things, and I would like, if I might, to make that clear. To be superficial means not to start from the surface but to be already a little bit beneath it, and this is the source of the greatest error. That is to say, we are always—however uninformed we may be—we are always clever and not truly docile. So we cannot leave it at saying we must not try to be clever; we must make an effort not to be clever. We must be truly docile. That is to say, we must acquire the posture, which we do not have, of the true addressee of Thucydides. Thucydides did not write for us twentieth-century people, that goes without saying. But that is not the greatest difficulty, though it is a difficulty, because he wrote in Greek and in a very difficult Greek, you know, and we have to depend on the translators, on the commentators, on the dictionaries, and the grammars and so on—these are all terrific things, but they are nevertheless trivial difficulties compared with the true difficulty of the basic work.

For this purpose we would have to note who is that man—I mean that type—whom Thucydides addresses. It is perfectly possible that Thucydides addresses primarily not Thucydideses, because there are not many and it is perhaps of no use to write for Thucydideses. What I am trying to show is only now what question we would have to answer, we would to have to had answered, in order to be able to claim that fundamentally we have understood Thucydides, which doesn't mean that we have understood every little difficulty. Whom does he address? What type of man does he address? It is a fair assumption to assume that [it is] not Thucydideses. We would have to see, and that would emerge only from a close study of the book and understanding of the book, who is the addressee. Now we have some help. I don't say that we can answer the question, but we have some help. Who is praised most highly in[12] [the] book?

Student: Nicias.

LS: Nicias. How interesting. Why do you say that?

Same Student: He says—I can't remember the exact words—he was the only man in the war [. . .] who was what men call good.[xxi]

LS: I think your quotation, while not one hundred percent literal, was sufficient. And I agree absolutely with you.

[xxi] Thucydides 7.86.5.

Same Student: In other words, he was a decent, good man—

LS: I believe you hit it on the nail, but there will be some objection to what you say. The gentleman on my right must be up in arms.

Student: No.

LS: You agree? Very good. Who disagrees?

Student: Well, I don't want to reveal my paper, but[13] the first part of book 6, where Nicias and Alcibiades debate, clearly shows—and also the events that follow in Sicily—Nicias is not so highly praised.

LS: Yes, but to which—oh no! Here is formidable ground. This is what appears to you from the narrative, from the deeds. But the deeds, in a way, are silent. And the explicit utterances of Thucydides are [. . .]

Student: I wonder if there isn't somebody else who is more praised than—

LS: Exactly! Who?

Same Student: An Athenian also: Pericles.

LS: I believe that would be the first objection to what the first gentleman has said. How would you defend your thesis?

Same Student: Partially, or provisionally by saying that the fundamental criticism made of Pericles is that whereas Nicias always seemed to be frightened by fortune—he makes the statement in this book about one of the reasons why Nicias is led to peace was his fear of fortune—Pericles seems to have founded his whole state upon fortune, that is, the possibility—

LS: Now you make the same methodic error which a previous student made. You would have to contrast the explicit judgment of Pericles—the explicit judgment of Thucydides on Pericles—with his explicit judgment on Nicias, and then have said that the praise of Pericles is as high as that of Nicias. At first glance, I think you are absolutely right. Now if this is correct—suppose we may assume it. Then we see Thucydides speaking to the future Niciases. Now what are the Niciases? What was the job of Nicias?

Student: He was a general.

LS: Sure. That he talks to future generals is manifest. Why does he enter into all these strategic and tactical details if he is not speaking, at least primarily, to generals? Now there is something else which is characteristic of Nicias, and what is that?

Student: Aside from his trust in fortune and his caution is his goodness. Moral rectitude.

LS: Good. That would be another qualification. In other words, we must—and while Pericles's incorruptibility is very clearly stated, that is not of course the full story of rectitude, because a man can be incorruptible and have all kinds of other vices.

Student: Lenin would be an illustration.

LS: Or Robespierre, Maximilien [. . .] So that is very well. But what is the other massive quality of—

Student: Moderation, conservatism.

LS: Yes, that belongs all together. I mean, in other words, it is no accident that Nicias is a pro-Spartan. But there is another quality of Nicias which stands out.

Student: Piety.

LS: Piety, and more specifically, concern with oracles. Concern with oracles. Now we see that the concern with oracles was true. Signs, portents. And Thucydides makes a statement in chapter 23 [about] why the Peloponnesian War was the biggest of all wars. He speaks first of the many sieges and many men killed and cities ruined and all that kind of thing, and then he turns to other things which in our opinion have nothing to do with the war: earthquakes, sicknesses, and other natural catastrophes. This makes sense in the context always if there is a hidden relation between these events and the war. Thucydides doesn't say so, but that is clear. In other words, from Nicias's point of view such a connection would exist. Well, this needs of course a long consideration and reconsideration, but tentatively one can say that, and we must develop to the greatest in our power the Nicias in us—you know, everybody. You know there is no human greatness of any kind of which the rudiments are not in every human being; I mean, since liberal educators say any one of us could become a painter or a musician—you must have heard that—if you are properly trained. Of course the effort involved would be wasted in many cases, but if you have sufficient money and sufficient time, perhaps you could make a slight difference.

But this method, the less-specialized methods of which we are speaking now which characterize Nicias, we all can have in us and can develop. That we would have to do. And now, if I may add something before I give you [. . .] perhaps Thucydides does not wish all of his readers to remain Niciases. That could also be. Do you see my point?

Student: Yes, that is what I was implying. It could not if Nicias was only a general, now we are going to say—

LS: "General" means of course more here than it means now because it was a political office.

Same Student: Are we going to say then that Thucydides is not concerned with giving advice to legislators, to founders of states? We can do this when we put the emphasis on Nicias rather than Pericles.

LS: Not necessarily. But what I thought of in this Nicias–Pericles opposition was that, for example, Pericles, who reveals himself at the very beginning of his most solemn speech, the funeral speech, as a despiser of the republic, a despiser of *nomos*—that is surely not Nicias. Do you remember the beginning?

Student: In another sense, it might be a manifestation of Pericles's generosity that he would identify his own urges with the people.

LS: That could be. We don't know where he wants to lead us, but we can safely say that if we are in our best possibilities lower than Nicias, in our best hopes lower than Nicias, we will not understand. We must start in this way. And whether he will lead us to Pericles or to someone else, that remains to be seen.

Now here I would like to make this point that I made on an earlier occasion, that Thucydides says that war is a violent teacher: a teacher of violence, but also by means of violence, that is undecided by the adjective. But a teacher, a teacher—you know it is not merely the means involved—one learns something from going through a war with one's eyes open, as Thucydides surely did. Thucydides perhaps—perhaps Nicias did not learn a lesson from the war, perhaps not. Perhaps he was too set in his ways.

Student: Is it not the case that Thucydides—the indications are—was rather less superstitious than were the common people? But you wouldn't want to assert that Thucydides was once—why this would make a pattern—that the person who would be the most conservative would be not too bright. That is, it more or less falls into a pattern in a way, so to speak: superstitious, conservative—

LS: Well, these two things are not identical.

Same Student: Well, I wonder if they aren't.

LS: Oh, no. I have read an article, or I have heard about an article in the *Political Science Review* about conservatives by a man called [. . .] in which he proved beyond a shadow of a doubt on the basis of many interviews that the conservatives are the most bigoted, the most psychopathic, and other qualities; and I can only say that the evidence which he used was too limited.[xxii] If the evidence was of any value, it was too limited. And I would suggest, if I would see this colleague, for example, [that] he should study a few Shakespearean plays, and I think according to all his criteria he would come up with the conclusion that Shakespeare was a conservative. And so I think it would be somewhat harsh on Shakespeare to apply to him these terms. But if you think that Shakespeare is too ambiguous, being a poet, take Plato or Aristotle, and I think no one ever said that

[xxii] Strauss is probably referring to Herbert McCloskey, "Conservatism and Personality," *American Political Science Review* 52 (1958): 27-45.

Aristotle was anything but a conservative. And I don't find in him these grave intellectual defects which [. . .] found in some farmers in a particularly backward county in the Midwest. I suppose that was his evidence.

But to come back to the serious issue. Surely Thucydides's opinions, to state it very provisionally, were not identical with the opinions of Nicias. That is sure; that is exactly what I mean by the transformation which he tries to achieve. But there was a question in this neighborhood.

Student: At any rate, the persons whom Thucydides addresses here are Athenians, are they not?

LS: No. This is clear. I mean, regarding this point there is universal agreement among all students of Thucydides I have seen that—you see, the mere fact that he explains quite a few things that were known to every Athenian proves that he addresses also non-Athenians. He addresses Greeks—there is no question about that because he wrote in Greek—and the notion of translation of Thucydides, say, into Persian or into any other language—although there was a reference here, remember: Themistocles learned Persian, do you not remember that? And that is of course the first step toward the idea of translation, to learn a foreign language. But he thought of writing for Greeks in general, that is clear. And so did I dispose of your difficulty, or do you still have a question?

Same Student: You created a difficulty here for me because, for one thing, it seems to me that he would be writing for people who could profit from the use of this history. He says at the beginning that he did it for use.

LS: Yes, but the question is what that use is, you know, whether its use means that you have here certain recipes. In other words, if you attack a fortified coast from the sea you proceed this way, and if you attack a hill, you do that. That you do not mean, recipes. What do you mean then?

Same Student: I mean that the persons reading it would learn by it from the mistakes made by others, and the successes of others, and by the virtues exemplified by others, how to mold their actions towards certain problems. And, secondly, he would be talking to—

LS: There is a formula—I don't know who coined that, who said that the purpose of history is not to make us clever for the next time, but wise for all time. You know, in other words, not give us special recipes which we can apply which of course wouldn't work the next time, because the next time the situation would be different, but that we are wiser as a whole and therefore would not be inflexible and chained to mere recipes.

Same Student: The second reason that come to me that he might be speaking more to the Athenians than to the Spartans is the fact that it is the Athenian people who might at least have the possibility of becoming either a Nicias or a Pericles, and that with the exception of Brasidas and perhaps others which I can't think of right now—well, the Spartans were

not able to escape from the legal framework of Sparta. But the Athenians, being more on their own, could become better people as persons; they could become a Pericles or a Nicias, and they could profit better from the history.

LS: I would state it somewhat differently, but I would agree. The prospect that Thucydides would be read in Athens[14] [was] much greater than that he would be read in Sparta. But there are not only Athens and Sparta; we have read something about Argos today, we have read something about Corinth and Thebes, and also Sicily, and some of the islands. I mean, that is true: Sparta was not likely to become in this sense [literate].[xxiii] That is true.

Student: Insofar as it is in a sense for all mankind—even from that alone, wouldn't you think that it is for someone like Thucydides himself, neither Spartan nor Athenian?

LS: Yes, sure, but that is a question which we have to consider. If we agree with the previous questioner that the baseline, the starting point, is Nicias, we imply that we are to be led from Nicias elsewhere. That elsewhere could mean Pericles. I mean not that we all should become Pericleses, but that they should see Pericles as their top or someone else—or someone else, or something like Thucydides's own wisdom. That remains to be seen. In other words, what you suggest is in no way excluded by our previous remarks.

Student: It certainly looks like it would have to be for someone like, or as intelligent anyway, as Thucydides himself.

LS: Yes, that depends. You see there may be—

Same Student: Not that it couldn't be for someone who is less intelligent also.

LS: Yes, but this must be—you must state this more precisely. While of course there is an infinite variety of levels of understanding among human beings, nevertheless one can make some rough divisions into types, you know, and only in this way can we get some clarity. What I have in mind as a possibility is this. The interpretation—a very frequent interpretation—is that the man whom Thucydides admired most is Pericles, and that is of course not a wholly unfounded assertion. You know, there is some evidence for that. But as I understand it, I believe that for Thucydides Pericles was not the highest, although he may be—no, surely he was not the most gifted man, the most gifted man was Alcibiades—but still, say he was the most marvelous, the most admirable man, that Pericles could be. I don't believe that this was Thucydides's opinion. But how then could he create that impression? For a certain part of his audience, to those Athenians or in other cities who are fooled and driven into all kinds of nonsense by people like Cleon and their ilk; for these people Pericles might constitute the ceiling, and therefore he makes him appear [so] to some extent—but superficially, and I think altogether deceiving. But Thucydides might very well have seen a higher ceiling, you know.

[xxiii] The transcript has "literal."

Student: Could I resolve this as far as I personally am concerned? One of the things that comes out, it seems to me quite—well, the original point about the addressee, it hits me very much—

LS: Yes, I was amazed by this agreement between at least three of us, and no opposition on the part of anyone.

Same Student: Yes, it was suspicious; a "synthetic peace."

LS: No, I would say it was a sign of the evidence!

Same Student: Well, as I would see this, the thing about Nicias, it seems to me, is that you get a very full picture of Nicias's character. It is filled out in much more detail and depth than it is with many of these other people. But two things are quite obvious: Nicias was not—he was a failure as a statesman as compared with Pericles, and he was a failure as a general compared with, let's say, Brasidas. And it seems to me that somehow the cause of his failure in both of these things is connected with his goodness as an individual.

LS: Sure, if you are right there, this would appear on the basis of a rather profound reflection; it would not be the message of the book. The message of the book would rather simply be that here you have a wonderful, patriotic, decent citizen—who was a very good general compared with what we have seen hitherto, but who was of course not the greatest of all generals—and who was then through his patriotism maneuvered by Alcibiades into a situation where he had to take the command of the Sicilian expedition. And then, without any fault of his, by the stupidity of the Athenian people who called back Alcibiades, shouldered the responsibility which was too great for him. And he perished miserably, but nobly. I think that is nothing which—I mean, after all, mere success alone cannot be a criterion, but Nicias stands out as a shining character. When you compare Nicias here to the Nicias in Plato's *Laches* or with the Nicias in Aristophanes's *Knights*, then it is quite clear that Nicias appears in a much more favorable light in Thucydides than in Plato's dialogue. One should perhaps also consider Plutarch's *Nicias* for this purpose, which I have not done.

Same Student: The way I would see this is not that Thucydides does not actually—you aren't aware that you go from there. I incline to say in comparing Nicias to Pericles that one of the things Thucydides is saying is that a person like Nicias in a sense can't succeed as a Pericles and that this is one of the problems. And therefore that different kinds of people are necessary, with different characteristics, and he leaves it unresolved as to which is the—this is the unsolved problem which he leaves for us.

LS: Yes, but still one must say that the explicit utterance of Thucydides on Nicias surpasses in its praising character everything that he says about anyone else.

Same Student: This would lead me to end that Thucydides was more interested in the personal qualities of the individual person than he was in the character of the statesman as a statesman, or a general as a general.

LS: Yes, but that you cannot separate. You cannot separate [it] because these general qualities are also there in Nicias. [Mr. Strauss regards diverse questioners.][xxiv] What should I do in order to comply with the minimum rules of justice?[15]

Student: To what extent to you think that Thucydides does favor Nicias? Do you have any sort of final judgment? To what extent would we say[16] that Thucydides seemed finally to approve of Nicias's position, rather than to take the position suggested that there are different sorts of people? Combine these two views. How far can you say that after all Thucydides himself, a man of a certain time in history—and that there has been somehow a failure of nerve, and [. . .] one comes to the verdict that Thucydides's picture of Nicias is to say that a man who finally decided that above all he want[ed] a quiet life would adhere to Nicias's position? [xxv]

LS: Yes, but you see, that is the point. It is not so simple. Nicias wanted a quiet life after having done very great service to his city. After all, not every period in which men live is cursed with a twenty-seven years' war. The ordinary thing is a war of a few campaigns, a few years. And if he is a distinguished general, that is very much. That I think would be no difficulty. There are some other of these broader complaints. I told you at the beginning of this seminar that I had the feeling that somehow I had figured out the radius of the circle which Thucydides describes. Now the metaphor becomes mixed, as you will see immediately. While I knew the radius, I could not describe the circle; and I had only a few stretches of the circle and then other parts which were wholly dark to me. And I believe that the question—there are other points which are based on which I said today, namely, this almost explicit change in Thucydides from an impartial point of view, considering the Spartans and Athenians, to a Spartan point of view. It reveals to us something of the deeper structure of this book, and this led me in some way to the question of the primary addressee of the book. And I think next time I will be able to present another point, in itself wholly unrelated to that, which will lead to a deeper stratum. And that is—I can only assert—I laid the involuntary foundation for it today when I made the remark about the beginning of the tenth year, you know, and the beginning of the sixth and the eighth year, and the result was roughly this: the crucial importance of the division of the book into years. The division into books, as you know, is not dependable; there is no reason to think that these went back to Thucydides. The division into years is surely Thucydidean, and therefore this leads to one conclusion on the basis of a premise which you can rightly reject as entirely hypothetical but which I regard as non-hypothetical on the basis not of any text I could quote, but of some experience in these matters, according to which the central is the most important. I believe that the story of the fourteenth year, the central year of the war—you know, the thing as a whole—which happens to be a peace year, of course, in one sense is particularly helpful. I noticed this only after I had seen that certain strange things

[xxiv] Noted by the transcriber.

[xxv] The transcriber notes: "This question was only marginally audible and incoherent."

happened in the fourteenth year of the war—no, let us continue[xxvi]—and then I said, in what year was that precisely? Then I looked it up in my list of the years and I saw that it was the fourteenth year. And then I say, by the use of the very elementary arithmetic, that this is the central year. And knowing this principle of the center from many experiences, I linked it up.

Student: The central chapter of book 6, if book 6 can be looked upon as a unit in itself, is the recall of Alcibiades, and would you regard that as a mere coincidence?

LS: Of course I couldn't say. I must say that there is a tradition to the effect—going back to people who knew things now lost in antiquity—that there was also another division of the books, into thirteen books, I think it was, instead of eight. I have no right to assume that. In the case of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, for example, I am sure, whatever the classical scholars may say, that the division into four books is Xenophontic, but there I know my way better. Here I don't dare.

Same Student: It struck me that the recall of Alcibiades in the central chapter of that book could not be mere coincidence.

LS: That could very well be, but you mustn't forget that there can be accidents. That is the point of the oracles, you see.

[xxvi] Apparently a remark to a student who wants to raise a point or a question.

Session 11: February 7, 1962
Book 5, chapters 57-116

Leo Strauss: [. . .]

Student: I would say that Athens, by a diplomatic policy that keeps Sparta busy in its own area and specifically by seeing to it that there are hostile forces in Sparta, or at least distrusting forces, in the passageway from Sparta into Attica, is able to provide itself with the type of security that makes sensible further consolidations and expansion of the empire and the pursuing of traditional objectives, two of which were Sicily and Melos, both of which had been hinted at previously and eyed previously by Athens.

LS: That is a very good point.[i] There is another point which comes out in the Melian dialogue which has to be argued. You remember it. Now another point which you made was very good regarding the oligarchic rule in Argos and in Melos and the consequences it had. Truce with Sparta in Argos, and neutrality—which could be seen as a pro-Spartan action—in Melos, and also the other things connected with it which I will not bother to repeat. You also very aptly compared[1] the situation in Melos with that in Mytilene; Mytilene was saved by an action of the Athenian assembly, not by the Athenian generals on the spot. Melos was not saved because the decision was made by the generals.[ii] And on the other side, in Mytilene the *demos* had come to power, so the Athenian *demos* saved the Mytilenean demos. And here the Athenian generals—of course generals of a democracy, but still generals—destroy Melos via the Melian oligarchy. That was another point.

And the point you made about the *demos*, I think, has the great authority of Aristotle. There is a remark, not occurring in the *Politics* but in the *Athenian Constitution*: "the customary good-naturednesss of the demos." That is the expression which Aristotle used when he speaks of the democratic restoration in 403—you know, after the expulsion of the Thirty Tyrants.[iii] And you know that was a very decent settlement by the ruler, the democratic leaders; he says that he regards this as more characteristic of the democratic

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

[ii] Here Strauss may follow the student paper-giver into error. The final sentence of Thucydides 5.116 implies that the "decision of the Athenians" to "[slay] all the men of military age and [make] slaves of the women and children" of Melos was made by the same body of Athenians that subsequently sent out a colony of "five hundred men of their own" to inhabit the place. That body must have been the Athenian popular assembly, not the generals in command at Melos. According to Plutarch, moreover, it was Alcibiades who was principally responsible for the slaughter of the Melians, having spoken in support of the decree, which similarly implies that it was a decision of the Athenian assembly (*Life of Alcibiades* 16.5*).* While we don't know to what source Plutarch owes this claim, he does assert earlier in the *Life* that he has excluded all unsubstantiated libel of Alcibiades from it.

[iii] Though Strauss makes this point throughout the courses on Thucydides, the reference in Aristotle *Constitution of Athens* is to a much earlier episode of Athenian history, the expulsion of the Peisistratid tyrants.

[temper] than the Corcyraean democracy, you know. But in Corcyra we have seen the nasty stuff started by the oligarchy. That is interesting; an interesting light comes which does not come out so clearly in the general notion of classical politics and its view of democracy as the opposite, but it is there.

Now I would like to ask you a very central question. You said this dialogue is very famous. Indeed, but there are other dialogues, representations of this savage view in classical literature that you know: Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, Callicles in the *Gorgias*. How would you compare the Thucydidean treatment and the Platonic treatment? I mean, you are perfectly free to express any impression, "value judgment" you like.

Same Student: I would say that Thrasymachus shares the same general theme of the Melian dialogue—representing such a position.

LS: Yes, and perhaps also Callicles. But go on. I mean, what is the difference, manner of treatment, the moving character or the principles in every respect?

Same Student: To begin with, there is one very self-evident difference and that is the treatment in Plato comes in a discussion or discourse, where one is not quite as shocked to hear the view presented to be explored and examined as he is when the view is examined in an historical situation.

LS: One wouldn't know whether Thrasymachus or Callicles would exactly act as they say. That is very true. And with this is probably connected, at least I feel, that the Melian dialogue is more immediately moving as an account or presentation of this particular thing. What about principles, disregarding now all other aspects of the works?

Same Student: I think Thrasymachus makes an attempt to identify justice with the power of the stronger; the Athenians do not attempt to do this. In fact, in the speech of the Athenian ambassadors earlier in Sparta they make it very clear that there is a distinction between the natural law of power and justice, because they point out that although Athens is primarily pursuing the natural law in using its powers to subject the weaker, still Athens should be commended because it does nod its head toward justice in being moderate and lenient—

LS: In the exercise of its power. It acts with its power gently, or at least not cruelly. But that does not mean, of course, that there is anything beyond the power–political, you know.

Same Student: I think this is true of the Athenian position in the Melian dialogue. But I do not get the impression that they are attempting to say that the principles they are pursuing are principles of justice; principles that they prefer over justice have more meaning.

Student: Thrasymachus is speaking of obedience to the law of Athens, obedience to the positive law, whereas this is a question of international relations—

LS: You bring it out [in] a bit complicated [way], but this is the point I was driving at. In the Platonic discussions it is a question of the individuals; in Thucydides it is entirely a question of cities. In other words, that is of course an enormous difficulty which is not brought out in this Thucydidean dialogue—that is, how you can have individuals who are concerned with decency, with their fellow citizens, if the whole *polis* is based the right of the stronger. That I believe is of some importance. Now before I turn to a discussion of this point I would like to read you a few sentences from a student's statement about Nicias, Pericles, and the purpose of the history. It is a long and very clear statement; I will read only the points which are the most important.

"Nicias is, as a man, preferred to Pericles. The suspicion of *hubris*, or insolent pride, is conclusive. But the best man may not be the best statesman. If Nicias had been a Pericles, Athens might not have fallen so far into folly; but then he would not have been Nicias. This is a classical moral paradox. Thucydides I'm sure means our gaze to move between the best man and the best statesman, and we are to draw our own conclusions. But does this lead to a very personal thing—in weighing the kind of end that a man deserves it is to personal virtues that Thucydides rightly looks."

That is a very sensible statement and I would only add one point. The student does not contest—and I believe he grants by implication—[that] the primary addressee is Nicias. And then the movement which is to take place among his thinking readers, would it be the movement from Nicias to something like Pericles? I say "something like," meaning a man of his sympathies. That is all right, but I would say there is perhaps something not only quantitatively different, different in degree, from Pericles; there may even be something higher qualitatively than any Pericles, and that would be wisdom, the wisest man proper, like Thucydides himself. That is the only addition I have to make. Now we turn to our section. I stopped last time in the middle of this first battle between the Argives and the Spartans.

There is something like a *stasis*—a civil war—in Sparta described in chapter 63. Perhaps we should read that so that we return into the midst of things.

Reader:
The Lacedaemonians, after their return from Argos with their four months' truce, severely questioned Agis for that, upon so fair an opportunity as they never had before, he subdued not Argos to the state; for so many and so good confederates would hardly be gotten together again at one time. But when also the news came of the taking of Orchomenus, then was their indignation much greater; and they presently resolved, contrary to their own custom, in their passion, to raze his house, and fine him in the sum of ten thousand drachmes. But he besought them that they would do neither of these things yet, and promised that, leading out the army again, he would by some valiant action cancel those accusations; or, if not, they might proceed afterwards to do with him whatsoever they thought good. So they forbore both the fine and the razing of his house,

but made a decree for that present, such as had never been before, that ten Spartans should be elected and joined with him as counselors, without whom it should not be lawful for him to lead the army into the field.[iv]

LS: That is of course not an illegal act, as appears from the context, but what they had in mind was a legal punishment. Somehow he persuades the Spartans not to punish him. But the Spartans are not satisfied with that; they make a new law. A new law. That foreshadows later developments. Now the danger to Sparta is then described in the immediate sequel.

Student: Mr. Strauss, the Spartans had some kind of rule, which I don't quite remember, that you can't march against the same enemy in consecutive campaigns, so that these ten counselors had to give their permission before he could attack to prevent his being bribed to start, and hence immobilize Sparta against her opponent.

LS: Yes, we come to that. I believe that is one of the minor mistakes which our speaker made, that he misinterpreted what happened in that battle. We will come to that. But the important thing for the time being is only that a new law—the old-fashioned Spartans had to change their laws.

Now in the new campaign against Argos which was imposed on the Spartans [. . .] perhaps, it doesn't say so, through Alcibiades's instigation, the Spartans cannot wait until they have all the allies together, as they did in the preceding campaign. Agis tried to correct his former mistake by committing the opposite one and is prevented from this by one of the new commissioners. He is called here an old man in chapter 65, one of the old ones.

Student: Is he one of the counselors?

LS: That is not explicitly said, but I am sure that he is a man with authority, because Agis immediately acts. I think otherwise—so Agis comes to his senses, as it were. That I think shows the wisdom of the new law. And in this connection now, when we come to the description of the battle: Thucydides describes the traditional Spartan battle order as it was according to the law, according to *nomos*, and of course under the guidance of the Spartan king. That is in chapter 66. Now there is of course a certain irony in that . . . in this situation. He describes here the traditional Spartan battle order after that traditional order had been changed. That we must not overlook. In chapter 68, this is a very amusing chapter, I believe. Let us read that; that has also to do with Sparta.

Reader:
This was the order and preparation of both the armies. The army of the Lacedaemonians appeared to be the greater. But what the number was, either of the particulars of either side or in general—

LS: That means of all, meaning added up.

[iv] Thucydides 5.63.

Reader:
I could not exactly write. For the number of the Lacedaemonians, agreeable to the secrecy of that state, was unknown—

LS: The secrecy of the regime, of the political order.

Reader:
and of the other side, for the ostentation usual with all men touching the number of themselves, was unbelieved.

LS: Let us stop for one moment. He couldn't know the number of the enemies of Sparta because these were such terrible liars and boasters that they had no data, and from Sparta you couldn't know it because of their secretiveness, the opposite of boasting.

Reader:
Nevertheless, the number of the Lacedaemonians may be attained by computing thus. Besides the Sciritae, which were six hundred, there fought in all seven regiments; in every regiment were four companies, in each company were four enomotiae, and of every enomotia there stood in front four; but they were not ranged all alike in file, but as the captains of bands thought it necessary; but the army in general was so ordered as to be eight men in depth. And the first tank of the whole, besides the Sciritae, consisted of four hundred and forty-eight soldiers.[v]

LS: So he figures out the Spartan number; he does not try to figure out the number of the enemies of Sparta, does he? What does this speak? There is a beautiful Spartan self-contradiction here. The boasters are in a way, you see, better off. The data which you get are utterly unreliable; you can't do anything with it. The Spartans don't give you any data; but they have such a beautiful order that anybody can figure it out. And the contradiction between this secrecy and the order is, I think, highly amusing. Then there comes the exhortation before the battle in the next chapter. Let us read that, chapter 69.

Reader:
Now when they were ready to join, the commanders made their hortatives, every one to those that were under his own command. To the Mantineans it was said that they were to fight for their territory, and concerning their liberty and servitude; that the former might not be taken from them, and that they might not again taste of the latter. The Argives were admonished that whereas anciently they had the leading of Peloponnesus, and in it an equal share, they should not now suffer themselves to be deprived of it for ever; and that withal, they should now revenge the many injuries of a city, their neighbour and enemy. To the Athenians, it was remembered how honourable a thing it would be for them, in company of so many and good confederates, to be inferior to none of them; and that if they had once vanquished the Lacedaemonians in Peloponnesus, their own dominion would become both the more assured and the larger by it; and that no other would invade their territory hereafter.

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[v] Thucydides 5.68.

LS: You see here now the great difference. That is the difference between Alcibiades and Pericles, that now the goal is much more ambitious than it was under Pericles [. . .] And let us also see what the Spartans are told.

Reader:
Thus much was said to the Argives and their confederates. But the Lacedaemonians encouraged one another both of themselves and also by the manner of their discipline in the war, taking encouragement, being valiant men, by the commemoration of what they already knew; as being well acquainted that a long actual experience conferred more to their safety than any short verbal exhortation, though never so well delivered.[vi]

LS: The term is not "experience" in Greek, but [*meletēn*], ["care"]. We have found this also in earlier Spartan remarks, and also referred to in the funeral speech—the care, the long discipline, something of this kind. You know? I mean also, I believe in the Themistocles characterization—you know, it is used in contradistinction to nature, also; natural gifts and [. . .] There was an interesting case, I forgot which—no, it may well be in the case of Pausanias, where this long *meletē*, this long care, discipline, upbringing, would prove to be so valueless.[vii] Themistocles's quality, giftedness, proved to be a much greater help to him.

Then in the next chapter he describes the beautiful order of the Spartans as they advanced, and their slowness, quiet slowness. Those of you who have read and remembered Plato's *Charmides* may remember the first definition of moderation—the dialogue deals with moderation—given there. Do you remember that, when Socrates asks what is moderation, the first answer? The first answers are always very interesting because they give the first impression, which is not sufficient, but characteristic. Slowness; the moderate man is slow. But then you would start defining manliness, it would be rather the opposite: quick. And Socrates can easily refute it—for example, a man who is writing, doing everything very slow; I forget now the simplest example where slowness would be absolutely fatal and absurd. Is he moderate? Of course not. So slowness is insufficient.[viii] But slowness is a sign of the Spartan sturdiness, stolidity, solidity, moderation. And it is explicitly noted that their use of flute players is not made for the sake of the divine, but merely for the sake of discipline. That is explicitly said.

Now when he describes Agis's tactics, which takes into account the effect of the fear of every soldier—you know, there are armies in which it was presupposed that a soldier simply doesn't know fear. That was largely the principle in the Prussian army, and that led of course to gross psychological errors; the Spartans are in this respect much more sensible. Yet in the next chapter it appears that this excellent order of the Spartans does not work. The gross disobedience of two commanders. Yet the Spartans win; they win, however, not by their experience but by their simple bravery. This is explicitly said. The Athenians make a poor show. And the result of this great Spartan victory is that Sparta's

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[vi] Thucydides 5.69.
[vii] Thucydides 1.94-95, 128.2-134, although these passages contain no reference to *meletē.*
[viii] Plato *Charmides* 159a-160d.

renown is now fully restored, which implies that it was important—I mean, it had fallen very low, through Pylos especially; and what happened after Pylos, may I ask? On the Spartan side?

Student: The cases where they did not fight would appear the greater innovations [. . .]

LS: No, no, it is a very big thing which Sparta did to restore her renown.

Same Student: Amphipolis.

LS: Brasidas, Brasidas. So this implies that Sparta's renown was not restored fully by Brasidas. And may I ask why?

Same Student: They were not Spartans in Brasidas's army, were they?

LS: There were some Spartans around. But Brasidas established his renown. In other words: why, that was Brasidas, not Sparta! But there was another point implied here which either our speaker said or it occurred to me while we read his paper. There is a certain very great irony here. After all, the Spartans won a victory; this victory was won in a very dubious way. If you look at the mere success, surely the Spartans won, but if you look at the manner in which they won, you know, what things happened there—the failure of the two commanders, and the prehistory of Agis before that—the commissioner had to tell the king, it has also its funny side.

Now as a consequence of the Spartan victory, the oligarchic party in Argos succeeds in persuading the city to make peace with Sparta, in spite of Alcibiades's presence there at the time—and not only to make peace with Sparta but to renounce the alliance with Athens. They establish then an oligarchy in Argos after the Spartan model. At this point there is a total failure of Alcibiades's policy in Argos.

Now let us take up in chapter 81 inclusively; and here we have reached the end of the fourteenth year. Chapters 57 to 81 are devoted to the fourteenth year. I would like now to make a brief reflection regarding the manner of Thucydides's writing. The war has twenty seven years, and the fourteenth year is the central year of the war. So this is in a way the center of the book, to the extent that the book deals with the Peloponnesian War and the war has twenty seven years. Now let us see whether there is a connection between this purely external thing, the central year, and the subject matter of what the story says. We have observed last time in chapter 15, which is of course in a somewhat preceding year, an almost obtrusive switch of Thucydides from an impartial view, where he views both the Athenians and the Spartans, to a presentation from the Spartan point of view. In chapter 26 we have seen, by considering that chapter, that in the second war—i.e., the war after the peace of Nicias—justice was on the Spartan side; and as it were, Thucydides moving with justice to the Spartan side. And in chapter 43 following, Alcibiades comes to the fore in Athens—you know, injustice incarnate, so to say. As the central year, the fourteenth year shows the complete restoration of Sparta's renown. It also presents to us the beauty of the Spartan cosmos, of the Spartan order, here especially

the battle order. And we have also seen in this same year this new law which the Spartans made, you know, regarding the waging of war and the supervision of their king. Now this Spartan battle order, although so beautiful, does not work in this crucial case, but the Spartans win nevertheless through their manner. We have also seen in the same year the contradiction between Sparta's secretiveness and her orderliness. All her security measures are no good because she was so orderly. And also, the contradiction which I mentioned before between the traditional law and the new law regarding the king.

I suggest, very tentatively, that the central year of the war brings out the praise of Sparta at the same time it brings out—I don't say the blame of Sparta, that is not hard enough—the comedy of Sparta. And I think we must see that the greatest praises of Sparta unqualified occur at the beginning of the work in book 1 and in book 8, the last book, and so there is a true order in this presentation.

It is also in the immediate sequel, when we come to the next year; and the next year, that is the fifteenth year, is only in two chapters. It is very short. But there was nothing much to tell. But we don't know whether there would have been quite a few little skirmishes which would have been interesting from the point of view of tactics, you know, and some new financial policy of Athens—there could have been some tributes not coming in—and all kinds of things. In other words, I do not know whether Thucydides could not have boosted this fifteenth year to an ordinary length. But he left it at just two chapters, about one half page. Now in this section, chapter 82, he describes—the Spartans have one of their festivals, and while they were having it, the Argive demos restores the democracy. The Spartans can't do anything. They are too slow, and too, they are old-fashioned; old inherited festivals take precedence over everything else. And there is also a case here, in chapter 82, of Spartan justice, in the middle of chapter 82. Will you read that?

Reader:
But afterwards, when there came ambassadors unto them, both from the Argives in the city, and from them that were driven out, there being present also their confederates, and much alleged on either side, they concluded at last that those in the city had done wrong

LS: I think that was the *demos*, naturally. The Spartans could not say that the *demos* of Argos would be in the right.

Reader:
and decreed to go against Argos with their army; but many delays passed, and much time was spent between.[ix]

LS: Yes. So you see, in other words, while the Spartans are "just"—they make a firm and clear decision that the right is on this side—no action follows. Do you see that? In other words, this comedy of Sparta goes on here in a way.

At any rate, the Argive democracy is restored, and naturally it restores the alliance with Athens. This is the chief event of the fifteenth year. So this big Spartan success, the

[ix] Thucydides 5.82.

victory at Mantinea by which the renown of Sparta was fully restored, a renown which was not fully restored by the genius of Brasidas, is lost by the happenings told in [. . .] Now I would like to draw a general conclusion from that before I go on with the more substantive matters. It seems to me that Thucydides's use of the division into years must be more carefully considered. In a way, this division is perfectly natural because it is better than any calendar system, where the Athenians and Spartans differed according to the beginning of office of the highest magistrate. That was not good. And to take the natural year, the beginning of spring, and then the cycle was much simpler. So Thucydides takes the natural year, dividing the year into summer and winter, and that is much easier. So the division into years in this way is perfectly justified by simple chronological considerations. But this division could have a somewhat different meaning also. We observed first at the beginning of the tenth year, when there occurred the unique beginning of the year with a religious event, and at the beginning of books 6 and 8 there were the only years beginning with a natural event, the others beginning with a political or military fact.

So the central year, the fourteenth, seems to disclose Thucydides's view of Sparta, and this implies what we have seen of other reasons before, that the pro-Spartan view which impressed us so much and which is by no means negligible—but still, it is a provisional view. As a provisional view, it is of course of the utmost importance, but it is not the last word of Thucydides. I would say this provisional view describes to us what we may call the outer circle, the outer rim of Thucydides's presentation. And this outer circle is discovered by the severe application of the principle—Thucydides's own overall judgments. I mean not the judgments on one particular battle or so, but the broad judgments, like that Sparta and Chios are the only cities which succeeded in combining prosperity and moderation, and similar things. And I remind you of a few very obvious facts: the place of Sparta in the archaeology—Sparta is compelled by Athens to wage war; i.e., Sparta is just, Apollo sides with Sparta, Sparta wages a war of liberation against the tyrant city Athens, and the place of Sparta in book 8. And this is confirmed by the Athenian speech in Sparta, by Pericles's speeches, although Pericles admits that Athens is a tyrant city by his contempt for law, which he shows at the very beginning of the funeral speech, and in the very eulogy of Pericles by Thucydides's silence about justice and moderation; and last but not least it is confirmed in a way by Brasidas.

Now I would like to add for those who like this kind of proceeding by externals which may or may not be meaningful—that is always a gamble—then it would mean, since Thucydides described and narrated only twenty-one years of the war rather than twenty-seven, the central year would be from this point of view the eleventh, and this means book 5, chapters 25 to 39. Now in this connection, in this part there is that famous chapter 26 in which Thucydides speaks of his own work again and also speaks of the fundamental difference between the first and the second half of the war and the unity of these two parts. I will leave it at these points now. We may take them up later.

Student: Within the fourteenth year, Thucydides makes note of one of the finest Hellenic armies that had ever been brought together and at the same time of one of the greatest

battles which had been fought in a long time. This would seem to indicate that in this greatest war this fourteenth year had the greatest battle.

LS: Yes, very good. I mean, it is quite outstanding. Very good what you say, and I am grateful to you for bringing that up. But also his description of the Spartan battle order, you know, is also something which sticks out in the whole book. It doesn't have the impressiveness of the Sicilian expedition or the funeral speech, but once we have come alive to the interesting qualities of the Sparta question—you know, that praise of Sparta in which Sparta restores fully her renown of Thermopylae—the Spartan battle order will make a strong impression on us.

Student: Would you say that the very fact that the Melian dialogue itself is an example of Thucydides's brilliant—it is a literary device on Thucydides's part; in other words, he lends it its significance. Because after all Melos was not the only city in which the men had been killed and the women and children taken into slavery.

LS: No, in Scione we have seen that before.

Same Student: So then the horror which he expressed over Melos [. . .] not something which was absolutely unthinkable. Melos is merely an event on which Thucydides seems to focus his own moral judgments.[x]

LS: In order to say this we would have first to study the Melian dialogue. But prior to any analysis, one could surely say Thucydides could have done such a thing on other occasions. Why did he do it here? That is a question which we must try to solve. But he wanted to show, to present to us so that we can see them, the post-Periclean Athens, Athenians, at their most non-Nicias. That is clear. Why did he select Melos and not Scione, or whatever else it might be? I believe the only answer can be that he did it with intention. In other words [. . .] In Melos there was a debate before the action, but I am sure there were other places where there were debates and he did not recount them. In other words, it is wiser to see the meaningfulness of the action, or speech or whatever it is, in the context. But to say, well, it just happened so, only in Melos did it take place, is to me unreal.

Same Student: Another point is that within the past couple of weeks there have been some leading debates—Professor Mackauer[xi] took the opportunity to say at a seminar that I attended that the Athenian policy at Melos was nothing new and was perfectly consistent with the values which were held as absolutely standard—

LS: What was standard?

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[x] It is unclear what expressions of Thucydides's horror at the Melian dialogue the student has in mind; equally problematic is his reference to Thucydides's moral judgments.

[xi] Christian Wilhelm Mackauer (1897-1970), German refugee classicist who taught at the University of Chicago from 1943 and oversaw the creation of the University's undergraduate sequence in the History of Western Civilization.

Same Student: [xii]You did what you could as long as there was no moral relationship existing in the form of a treaty or [. . .] so that we tend to throw up our hands in horror, but the Athenian action in Melos was perfectly consonant with the morality which was accepted in the Greek cosmos up to that time. That Thucydides must certainly [not] be said to be bringing a new moral order into the world.

LS: Well, I would not agree with that entirely. It may be so that the ordinary citizen or statesman or general took that for granted, that you can make such ultimatums. There was no legal arrangement—I mean, there was no truce of any kind. But one only has to read a few Euripidean tragedies, for example, the *Trojan Women*, to see that there were also Greeks who felt it was horrible.

Same Student: But Euripides was more or less a contemporary of Thucydides.

LS: Yes. Well, then all right, it was not merely Thucydides. There were a number of people of more refined feeling who did not take the usages of international law, if I may say so, as the highest standard of judgment. But I would assume that these things were not only something which emerged there at this very moment, but that a certain humanity and horror of this kind of toughness was much older and was not necessarily limited to the Greeks. But here I am sure Mr. Mackauer and I would radically disagree, and it would be unfair for you and I to fight it out vicariously. But it is true—it is something which I would admit, that in a way, that nothing new comes out here that did not come out already in the Athenian speech in Sparta. But still I would nevertheless say this: if you disregard everything else and read only Thucydides, only the Athenians state such principles. You know, the Corinthians—there is always some legality; you remember the notion of chicken and hen—[xiii]and those who simply speak of the right of the stronger are the Athenians—and to some extent Hermocrates in Syracuse, also another big commercial city, you know. I mean, men have various traits and it is quite true that there is a great difference within the *polis* and the relation between cities, and especially wholly unrelated cities, to say nothing of the barbarians; that is an entirely different story. You know that even Socrates, in the fifth book of the *Republic* when he tries to suggest some mitigation of warfare, cannot do more than suggest some mitigation of warfare among Greeks. Glaucon ends this discussion very characteristically by saying: Yes, against the barbarians we will do that. Socrates doesn't say that, meaning, there we will burn down houses just for the fun of it, and will do other things which are not explicitly stated, but in other words, no strings attached of any kind.

Student: If the end of the book is the true end, that means there really is a very significant quality in the fact that Thucydides moves from justice on the Athenian side to justice on the Spartan side. Would that be your view of the center?

[xii] The transcriber inserts a question mark here in parentheses; perhaps the student's statement is unclear.

[xiii] Strauss is presumably referring to the presumption of the Corinthians, already discussed, that their colonists such as the Corcyraeans are obligated to them as if they were allies by treaty.

LS: Yes, but you must take this with a necessary grain of salt. I mean, after all, this fact had also a very brutal reason: he was exiled. But on the other hand, let us assume for one moment that Thucydides thought that he was unjustly exiled. Then justice is on his side, and then his moving to Sparta is an act of justice.

Same Student: It isn't a grain of salt that the book ended where it ended, if that is the real end?

LS: You mean now the ending of the whole book.

Same Student: Yes; he could have intended to end where he did in order to make the relation of his exile—

LS: That has nothing to do with it, because the exile lasted beyond the end of the war. And the book ends, of course, long before the end of the war.

Same Student: My point is that by making it end in the middle of the twenty-first year, the center then becomes his exile.

LS: No.

Same Student: Sure, because it was in the middle of the—

LS: Now let me see. No, I didn't think of that; that is quite true. In other words, if the end is intentional, as I assume, then it is intentional that only twenty-one years. Yes, that is true. That is good. Thank you.

Student: I was wondering in regard to the Melian question whether what is so vile about it would be the difference in context. Now Thrasymachus presents his position in the context of a discussion—that is, a philosophic discussion—and he never says, or at least I don't think he says, that the acts themselves will be justified on this basis; that is, that they won't explain away to some sort of moral hypocrisy. Now in the first part of Thucydides's work, that is, in book 1, there is a difference in context between that and the Melian dialogue, that you have a discussion between the Spartans and the Athenians, and the Athenians are showing that the Spartans would have done the same thing under the same conditions. That is, there isn't a concrete difference between them. Now in the case of the Melian dialogue, you have a different situation entirely. One, you have a concrete situation, and second, we do not have the Athenians saying to the Melians that they would do the same thing in the same conditions, because they are not even comparable. In the third place, they do not justify the cruelty done on some nice moral grounds. In fact, this is what is so vile about it, that[2] they justify it on the basis of immorality and do not propose other grounds. This opens up another question: Was this action really dictated by necessity? And maybe this is what is so vile: that they use the principles of necessity, yet even so it is not dictated by necessity—

LS: That is a good point, but we cannot—but only one point must be made clear which was not quite clear in what you said. Prior to reading Thucydides and interpreting the Melian dialogue, we have no right to say that the Athenians express Thucydides's view because—

Same Student: I didn't say that—

LS: I only wanted to make this clear. What we know only when we have read it without a deeper understanding is that the Athenians assert it, not more. But as for the question as far as you raised it, this has its two sides. The Athenians can be, maybe, only more honest than the Spartans—

Same Student: Maybe hypocrisy is needed, though.

LS: That is exactly the point, whether what appears as hypocritical does not have its virtues. That was the issue which I found very frequently in Germany. The Germans said that by teaching power politics without any "ifs" and "buts" they are honest: that [it] is it on which all people act, especially the British, and that British were hypocrites because they always had some religious and moral reason. And this we will find also in France, by the way. I believe I told this class the story of 1923, yes? So I will not again.

Now let us go on. Now in chapter 84, here we have the primary action by Alcibiades. Athens restores the alliance with Argos, with the other democracy. This is immediately followed by the Athenian campaign against Melos, a Spartan colony, yet being an island neutral in the war. Before applying force, the Athenians attempt to persuade the Melians to come over to their side. From the ensuing conversation between the Athenian ambassadors and the leading Melians in the absence of the common people.[xiv] And now this dialogue begins, which is fairly long but not as long as the funeral speech. It would be the second longest speech in Thucydides, if I remember well. It would be useful to compare the discussion between the Athenians and the Melians with the discussion between the Plataeans and Thebans or Spartans in the third book, [3]but the case was different: Plataea was not neutral, of course. But surely the Spartans and Thebans do not appear in a nicer light, although they speak of justice all the time. This in passing.

One can say, however, taking into consideration everything—including the dastardly act of the Plataeans in killing the one hundred eighty prisoners of war, you remember—one could say that the Athenians here are more unjust than the Thebans and Spartans in Plataea. They have no legal leg to stand on.

Now let us go on. The Athenians say, "You are fearful that we deceive your multitude; we do not wish to deceive anyone. But we comply with your request not to address your multitude, but we don't wish to deceive anyone. Therefore, interrupt us at any point you like." In other words, "We are willing to have a dialogue, not a mere set speech. Is this all right with you?" The Melians say, "Yes, but there is a strange contrast between this fairness of leisurely debate and the presence of your army." There is a beautiful

[xiv] This (incomplete) sentence is as it appears in the transcript.

illustration of that somewhere in Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, but I do not want to mention that now. "You are not merely content to debate us, I mean with the equality which a debate implies, but judge us. Our superior argument regarding justice will lead to war, and if we become persuaded, our prospectus is slavery and subjection." In other words, this is not a debate." They say, in other words, "The discussion is unfair in spite of your fair pretense, because there is no possibility of persuading you to return to Athens. You are unjust, you are not as fair as your pretenses." The Athenians: "You say that the presence of our army makes the discussion unfair. But our discussion would be entirely useless if we did not speak about the present, and instead speculate about the future." Is that not a beautiful rhetorical retort? They can argue, that is undeniable. The present—of course the present is all that counts in such a blackmail. "We would be excusable in our situation if we turn in all sorts of directions, including the future. But we must admit that our present debate deals with present salvation, i.e., that we must forget about the future." Clearly the Athenians have won the first round. On the basis of their concession and the equitable concession: (a) no public speech, but (b) even in private, no long speeches, as Socrates would say, but conversation, and discussion on the present as distinguished from the future. This is going to have great effects on the sequel.

This is the end of the introduction, and now there begins the debate itself in chapter 39. The Athenians say: "The issue is not as you said, justice, but the feasible . . .[xv] the feasible, the possible, what can be done, what we can do to you and what can you do to us. Only if there is on both sides equality of power to compel can the question of justice come up, and this is manifestly not the case between you and us. Given the inequality of power, justice is a mere beautiful name. Therefore there is no place here for long speeches, because long speeches would deal with these fair names. Not for your reason, but for this reason, there is no place for long speeches." This distinction which the Athenians make between the just and the feasible, or the possible, is only a different formulation of the distinction between the just and the necessary of which we have spoken before.

The Athenians go on to say: "This view is not peculiar to us Athenians. You yourself know that in the human *logos*, meaning in human calculation of what one should do, the status of justice is as we have stated it." The Melians: "Since you argue on the basis of the useful expedient in contradistinction to the just, we are compelled to accept that basis." Compelled by the power of the Athenians. "But," they go on, "expedience includes also the commonly expedient, the common good." In other words, they say, "Justice is, if you look at it, long-range calculation of profit, or enlightened interest. Everyone comes sooner or later into a position of danger where he will derive benefit from justice. Justice is designed for the protection of the weak; but since everyone, sooner or later, will be in the position of the weak, justice is in the interest of all. If you act with gross injustice while at the height of your power, you will be punished terribly if you fail, as you may."

[xv] It is not clear from Strauss's English what Greek term he would have uttered here, as the Athenians speak not of the possible or feasible but of the present or actual (*ta paronta*) and visible (*hōn horate*).

The Athenians: "We know that we may fail, i.e., lose our empire, but we shall lose it not through those whom we oppressed, people like you, but through the Spartans, and we are not at war with the Spartans. But let the danger which threatens us at the hands of our subjects be our worry—that is not your worry. It is precisely for the sake of our empire that we need Melos. If you give in, you will not be terribly oppressed; don't exaggerate. It will be to your benefit as well as to ours. It will be to that common benefit to which you have appealed in your preceding speech." In other words, you see the commonness of ground—at least, it works all the time. We have seen a few examples of that—the present, the present army, we speak about the present, don't we? And here again, the common benefit. Here we are not talking about the common benefit of all men and all times, but of the common benefit of you and us. What we propose is to our common benefit. So there is a common benefit; but this is not supplied by justice, but by the sound calculation that is to the benefit of the ruled and the rulers, that the rulers do not inflict unnecessary hardship on the ruled, and even protect the ruled. What's wrong with that? That is what the Athenians said in Sparta, you know: "We are not bestial rulers. Of course it is to our benefit to rule, but we—"[xvi] The Melians: "How can it be profitable for us to serve you as it is manifestly profitable to you to rule over us?" The Athenians: "Obviously! You will not be destroyed. Is that not to your benefit?" The Athenians have won another round.

In this section, chapters 89 to 93, the argument of the Athenians is that the common good of the Athenians and Melians is served by the submission of the Melians. Now we go on to chapter 94. The Melians: "You will not accept that we are your friends rather than your enemies and allies of neither side, i.e., neutral." And this is a very bad argument; it is even absurd. They can't be at the same time the friends of the Athenians and neutral. You know? We know such interesting cases now as the third powers: here you cannot at the same time be neutral and a friend of the West: that is difficult, if not impossible.

The Athenians: "Your friendship, as you understand it, will be more harmful to us than your enmity, for your friendship will be understood by our subjects as a sign of our weakness." The Melians: "Do your subjects not see the difference between your colonies and those who have deserted from you on the one hand—i.e., those to whom you justly dictate—and complete strangers, like ourselves?" Now the Melians enter into the spirit of the Athenians' pure calculation of expediency. The Athenians: "Not at all, for our subjects believe as well as you that their subjection is unjust"—you know, whether they are Ionians or Corinthians, they regard their subjection as unjust because they must pay tribute, and so on and so on: "So they believe as well as you that the whole matter in their subjection is the question of power. If we do not subjugate you, they [will] think we do not have the power to subjugate you, and this will increase their restiveness under our rule." But could one not say this: Is Melos so important? Is Melos not terribly weak? But this objection—why do the Melians not say that?

Student: Maybe it's not true.

LS: No, no, no. This would have destroyed their—

[xvi] The tape was changed at this point.

Student: Pride?

LS: No, no. Really practically. The Melians, after all, are willing to fight, and it would be flatly contradictory to that to say that we are so completely insignificant. They could never do that.

Now the Melians answer as follows. They repeat that the Athenians compel them to argue the issue entirely on the grounds of Athenian usefulness, Athenian interests, and not of justice. On that basis they argue again on this point, namely, the safety of the Athenian empire. Is it to the interest of the safety of the Athenian empire to conquer Melos? Your proceedings against us imply all neutrals are your enemies. Well, of course that was the axiom of the Spartans, you remember? What did you do to help Sparta? Nothing? Cut it off! You remember? All neutrals are your enemies, you imply: you thus make them your enemies. There are also interesting contemporary parallels to that: "You thus increase the power of your actual enemies by pushing all the neutrals into their hands. It is to your and to our benefit that we be permitted to remain neutral."

The Athenians: "Everyone knows that we have nothing against neutrals on the continent; we are only against neutrals who are islanders. And these islanders cannot"—for their own sake, that is implied—"these islanders cannot increase our enemies' power because our navy will prevent the junction between the islanders, any islanders, and Sparta." Somehow I was reminded, although I couldn't tell you now why—one thing is implied here which reminds of the formula "No war for Danzig." In other words, all neutrals see what you do to Melos, and they all will band together, and everyone will have become the universal enemy—you know, of everyone. Yes, but that is not so simple, as it is shown in what's wrong with our age, but as the French put it, [. . .] who will fight for . . . or for Danzig.[xvii] This is of course[4] also implied, but not said.

Let me elaborate this point a bit, because there are two things which must be said in addition to what our speaker suggested. We have no hope of progress on the continent, only on the islands. You see, even if this Argive policy succeeds, Argos will be strong enough to defend herself on land against any Athenian encroachment. We have no hope for progress on the continent, only on the islands; and that means that the Argive business is only a stepping stone toward the island of islands, Sicily. There is something Periclean in this—you know, naval power as the basis, not land power.

Now we come to part of chapter 100. The Melians: "But your subjects nevertheless take great risks to free themselves. All the more should we, who are still free, do everything to avoid subjugation. Otherwise we would be base cowards." Now they abandon completely

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[xvii] The free city of Danzig (present-day Gdansk in Poland), was a creature of the negotiations following the First World War. Inhabited primarily by Germans, Poles, and Jews, it was supposed to enjoy autonomy from both Germany and Poland. It existed under the sponsorship of the League of Nations but was abolished by Germany in 1939 after its invasion of Poland. Strauss refers to the unwillingness of the French to court war with Germany in the late 1930's just to preserve Danzig's autonomy.

the power–political argument and come back to a moral argument: not justice but nobility, but of course [. . .] They enlarge the issue. Two things have to be considered:[5] (a) the blessings of freedom, and (b) virtue. The Athenians in chapter 101 oppose this enlargement: "What has to be considered by you Melians, circumstanced as you are, is not virtue, but safety. You cannot afford it; you cannot afford to think of virtue in your situation. Be moderate"—that is my translation of this word [*sōphronōs*]" "Be sensible, be moderate." The implication: "For you Dorians after all are notorious for your moderation. Here is the place to show it."

The Melians: "In war the outcome does not depend entirely on numbers—in other words, it is not foolhardiness that we resist. Sometimes the chances are more impartial between the stronger and weaker," the . . . [6] Sometimes the chances are more just—that they do not say, they are only more "common" [*koinoteras*]. "If we give in before fighting, we are lost. But if we fight, there is still hope." The Athenians: "Hope is the most deceptive if not based on solid power. You do not have a ghost of a chance against us. Do not make the mistake of the many, who, while they still can be safe by human means, if at the price of unpalatable sacrifices; while they still can be safe humanly, turn to immanifest hopes," meaning hopes based on immanifest things, like soothsaying and oracles, and "whatever else of this kind causes ruin under the accompaniment of hopes." In other words, one can say the Athenians bring up the religious issue.

The Melians had only said there is hope because, after all, we may win the battle: you may make mistakes, and there may be some breakdown or something. The Athenians bring it up, and I think that is one of these aggravating things: you know, the Melians did not bring it up. The Melians reply: "We are inferior to you in power and chance, good luck, but we are not inferior to you, [to] your chance which comes from the divine, because we stand as pious men against people who are not just." They do not bluntly say "unjust" in their answer. "And as for power"—in other words, there are two items to be considered: power and chance. "Regarding chance, there is a chance coming from the gods, and in this respect we are in a much better position than you. As for power, we trust that the Spartans will help us for the sake of kinship and out of sheer shame if they let us down."

The Athenians: "As for the favor of the gods, or right conduct towards the gods, we are not badly off. For we do not demand for anything outside of what the human belief regarding the divine is—or we do not act outside of what [is] the customary with a view to the gods. Nor do we act outside of the [*es sphas boulēseōs*], of the wishing of the things which refer to themselves." That is not clear, whether they mean man or gods. "For of the divine we opine and of the human we know with certainty, that the stronger rules over the weaker 'by necessary nature,' by the necessity of nature." In other words, the rule of the stronger is the rule of gods and men; that is the principle that we act on. This *nomos*, this law, is sempiternal and universal. In other words, they say, "We are not impious because we imitate the gods." And what piety is higher than the imitation of the gods? But we will ask, what about the divine *nomos* which forbids injustice, greed, pride? And the implication is such a *nomos* would be impossible because of the natural necessity driving towards that. What is true of divine help is true also of the Spartan help. The

Spartans, [as] I interpret it the Spartans act on the same principle as the gods. Spartan help is like divine help; the gods are like the Spartans: in their conduct toward outsiders they are utterly selfish, and, in addition, slow. The divine help comes only too late; the Spartans are just only among themselves, and in their relation to others they regard the pleasant as noble and the expedient as just. They will not be of any help to you. So in other words, [that] your hopes are unfounded and the Spartans: these are the same themes which occur also in the Callicles and Thrasymachus discussions. The noble is for the ordinary man distinguished from the pleasant, but the Spartans identify them—but not by regarding the noble as pleasant, but by reducing the noble to the pleasant. In other words, what is pleasant for Sparta as Sparta, for the citizen body, is all which they consider. Among themselves they recognize the distinction between the noble and the pleasant. So what is pleasant for Spartan individuals is not yet regarded as noble in Sparta, but only among Spartans. You remember what we discussed when we spoke of book 3, chapter 82, the chapter on civil war, on *stasis*, that this principle there—and with which Thucydides seems to identify himself, because he states it in his own name—which[7] [is] in favor of justice, moderation; even the divine law is mentioned there. This, however, deals only with domestic relations within the *polis*. And the question is: What is the law regarding? By the way, to the point which you made before, the Melians could not have said what they said if there were not some basis in commonplace opinion for the notion that there is justice among cities, a justice not merely based on contractual relations between the cities involved.

Student: I'm not entirely happy—I haven't any authority to speak on—I'm not entirely happy about the way we talk around the word justice. I know there was a distinction in the way the Greeks used the word justice—that it wasn't necessarily a virtue, but just the way things were.

LS: Not quite—I mean, not quite. I mean, there were people that denied that justice was a virtue, but they were very marginal fellows, like Thrasymachus, who says what you call justice is simply, how shall I say it, a form of stupidity. Such people exist also today.

Same Student: But Thrasymachus was a fourth-century character.

LS: Yes, but who said prior to [8]the fourth century, the early fifth century, who said prior to that that justice was mere folly? Let us finish this, if you don't mind.

So in other words, the Athenians conclude: Your hopes are vain. The Melians go on: "Precisely Spartan self-interest will induce them to come to our help." So in other words, it is not a vain hope. The Athenians: "But self-interest demands safety—safety, that one doesn't take risks. Only the considerations of the just and noble induce men to take risks or to dare. But the Spartans are the very opposite to daring. Hence they are not concerned with justice and nobility; they will not help you." The Melians: "No conclusion can be drawn from the Spartans' general conduct. Our case is a particular one." The Athenians: "The Spartans may have more good will toward you than toward anyone else, but their caution will prevent them from acting on your behalf in a naval operation." The Melians: "But they might take land action against you"—"they might," in Greek the optative,

which is a form of wishing. That is the end of this round, which one must say clearly, as far as the argument goes, the Athenians have won.

Now we come to the conclusion, chapter 111. In the circumstance it is sheer folly to speak of the baseness of submission. "Is it not a much greater shame for you if your womenfolk and children will be enslaved? It is a much greater shame than if you pay tribute and so on. We demand from you [*metria*], moderate things, but in the sense which we discussed it before, according to measure. We act on the principle "resist equals, associate nobly with the stronger, be moderate with the weaker." "Associate nobly with the stronger," that can of course mean submit with dignity, and I think that is what they mean here, submit with dignity. "And we are not the people," the Athenians say, "who would unnecessarily hurt your pride; we would not tell you every day, 'You are our slaves,' nothing of that sort." So the answer is amazingly humane, considering the circumstance. The final reply of the Melians: they preserve their liberty, trusting the divine and the Spartans. In other words, their hopes have remained intact. And then the final remark of the Athenians: "You are the only men who judge the future, the hoped-for, as safer than what is seen, and you see the immanifest things by your wish that they should come to pass." In other words, your seeing is produced by wishing; you trust in chance. That is the last word. That is the end of it [. . .] I thought we should at least have a survey of the discussion.

Student: I was struck when I read the thing, and I would like to amplify the opinion I expressed earlier about the similarity between the Melian dialogue and the discussion between Hitler and the Austrian premier, Schuschnigg.[xviii] But there is this difference: Hitler too wanted Austria; he wanted it for various reasons,[9] [but] without war.

LS: I mean, everyone wants things without war.

Same Student: But what was the difference between the two? Hitler not only spoke of pure power calculations, but he also behaved as a madman [. . .] Now if he had simply talked about power calculation, then the Austrian premier might have answered like the Melians; his pride might have been hurt. But now we talk about the madman. The Austrian premier knew he could do nothing to change this. His own moral feelings were broken down to a certain extent to the contrary moral position opposed [to] it. As a result of Hitler's cleverness in feigning madness, he was able to finally come to the Austrian parliament and say something like this: This nation, this people, need not come with hat in hand; I myself take you into the greater Europe. But the Athenians could not and did not do this. I think this is something that is—

LS: Yes, sure. As far as I remember, there was nothing resembling a debate between Schuschnigg and Hitler. He just shouted at him. He shouted. Hitler never debated. His greatest admirers said what he was was due to a certain sleepwalker's intuition, but no

[xviii] Kurt A.J.J. von Schuschnigg (1897-1977), Prime Minister of Austria from 1934 to 1938. A conservative Catholic nationalist, he sought to preserve Austria's independence from Germany, but on February 12, 1938, Hitler presented him with an ultimatum of surrender that Schuschnigg was (according to his memoirs) coerced into signing.

argument. But on the other hand one must also say it led to certain grave blunders; you know, the famous story of the Russian campaign and the greatest mistake—the declaration of war against this country. That was simply an irrational act.

Same Student: Yes, but some people think that there was an insanity which crept into Hitler which was only potential during the early part, and some commentators feel that this part, this element of his fame—and I think it is interesting that you could not argue against a madman who was screaming about the immorality of opposing him. You can argue against somebody who is talking about—the one who is talking only about power, and you are talking about justice.

LS: I know, I am aware of that, but I think the cases are very different because there was in Austria at least a considerable part of the population in favor of the Nazis, and probably the most active part. I mean, the situation was different.

Same Student: But there were the people who might have gone over to Athens. So they are comparable.

LS: In Melos.

Same Student: They are comparable—

LS: But there were no organized pro-Athenian stormtroopers in Melos.

Student: It seems to me that there is a direct parallel between this and the Mytilenean affair. It seems to me that the Mytileneans made the same arguments to the Spartans [. . .] namely, if there is any question of justice, it can only occur between equals, and since the Mytileneans were weak and the Athenians were strong—

LS: Yes, but of course the situation was very different. I mean, the Melians were subjects of, allies to the Athenians, and came and deserted their allies in the midst of war, you know, and this was their grave embarrassment.[xix] But may I only say one point? Of course, the fact that the Athenians destroyed Melos is in itself utterly irrelevant for the last judgment, because the bigger power will always destroy the smaller power. You know? Otherwise it wouldn't be the bigger power. That doesn't mean the biggest number—that doesn't mean much; they can be very poorly organized and trained, and then they can be licked. Look at Hastings in India for an example of a very small troop which defeated very large armies.[xx] But the much more interesting point is that in the debate the Melians proved to be inferior to the Athenians. I think this will prove to be true even if we consider the external situation. You know what the Melians say at the beginning, very wisely: You are so strong that truly free and equal debate is not possible. But this of course does not settle the issue, in no way.

[xix] It was not the Melians who were neutral but the Mytilenaeans, who had deserted their allies the Athenians.

[xx] Warren Hastings (1732-1818). Governor General of Bengal from 1774, he did more than any other man to establish British power in India.

Thucydides's judgment could be said, as was suggested frequently, and mentioned by our speaker in a very strong point: Melos is followed by Sicily. People who act as the Athenians act toward Melos are bound to make a disastrous blunder. But to this one could reply as follows—Thucydides's calculation at 2.65: if the Athenians had not made the mistake of calling back Alcibiades, they might have won. So one would have to engage in a much deeper analysis. Why did they call back Alcibiades? That had to do with the piety of the Athenian people. Differently stated, it had to do with the manifest impiety of Alcibiades. Pericles got into various kinds of trouble because of[10] [the] accusation of Anaxagoras; but no one would have suspected Pericles of committing such a brutal sacrilegious act as Alcibiades was suspected of.[xxi]

Now is there another connection between this suspicion, founded or unfounded, against Alcibiades, and the conduct of the Athenian ambassadors in Melos? You know, it is they, after all, who bring up the religious issue and state these things. Are they not little Alcibiadeses? In other words, is not the Athenian embassy to Melos the same in spirit as Alcibiades? This, I think, would be a closer connection. So that Alcibiades was clever and a better general than Nicias—he could have defeated and conquered Sicily—but that he was prevented from defeating Sicily was due to his bad reputation. And part of that bad reputation had to do with his impiety, however superficial the Athenians' notion of piety may have been. But still, that was there. Was this not also active in the Melian affair, at least to the extent that this argument regarding the gods or the divine played a part and was, so to speak, purposely brought up by the Athenians? The Melians didn't begin with it.

Student: [. . .] about Alcibiades being the one who made the decision that the Melians should be killed. Also, if Alcibiades had been in Sicily, this would have been a policy that he would have espoused, and Nicias did not because almost immediately [. . .]. It seems to be a contrast. It is not the Athenians who are really in Sicily, it is the weak Melians who are in Sicily and are beaten.

LS: The weak?

Same Student: Melians, people who are afraid of[11] their own shadow.

LS: The Melians?

Same Student: It can be maintained that the Melians who rely on hope are fearful—

LS: Oh, I see now. In other words, the Athenian equivalent to the Melian situation, that's what you mean. Yes, that is true.

[xxi] Anaxagoras (ca. 500-428 BCE), from Clazomenae in Asia Minor, was a natural philosopher of the Ionian school who brought the approach of that school to Athens. Pericles was known to consort with him. In ca. 434 Anaxagoras was expelled from Athens for impiety, settling in Lampsacus in the Troad where he died. According to Diogenes Laertius, Pericles had delivered an (unsuccessful) speech in his defense.

Same Student: And Alcibiades is the equivalent to the ambassadors.

LS: Yes, that is correct. That is another way of looking at it. But still I would say you must not neglect the Alcibiades business. That is true. I mean, if you are right, then the outcome would be [that] Thucydides agrees neither with Alcibiades's Athenians nor with the Melians. And I believe that is confirmed by the remark about the Chians in book 8, when he makes his judgment that the Chians alone, apart from the Spartans, succeeded in combining prosperity with moderation. But the Chians also revolted somewhat prematurely against Athens, but they acted much less prematurely than the Melians did. And I think that is one of the finest delicacies of the many delicacies of Thucydides, that he never says that the Melians should have waited; he has too much respect for the nobility of the Melians: even though it was an imprudent act, it was a nobly imprudent act, and that must be respected. I believe that is part of this story of the Melians. But I think you are right; in other words, the link between Melos and Sicily is not only Alcibiades but also Nicias. But it is also true that the Alcibiades link is more visible than the Nicias link. That you would admit. But I would say this decisively confirms our thesis of last time: that the Alcibiades link is more visible, true, but that the primary addressee is Nicias. What you see primarily is the *hubris* of the Athenians leading to their fall; that is the Nicias side. But a deeper analysis shows it is more complicated than that, and that is where the error of Nicias comes in. I think that is really neatly stated now.

Same Student: One other question: Is there any significance in the fact that Thucydides glosses over Alcibiades—

LS: That is one of the probably millions of silences of Thucydides. But I suppose the immediate addressee, say, the intelligent readers of the next generation who read that book, knew of course many facts which we do not know. That is so, and therefore we must be very grateful to have some later writers, for example, Plutarch, but also Xenophon and some others, for transmitting to us some of the facts that are not there. By the way, also comedy tells us a lot of things—I mean, Aristophanean comedy. Even in Plato we find quite a few things. When we read the Nicias of Plato in the *Laches* it is at first glance very different from the Nicias of Thucydides, but I think a closer analysis will show that they are the same man. And also the Nicias in Aristophanes's *Knights*—no, he is closer to Thucydides's Nicias than Plato's, but even there there are differences which are interesting.

Same Student: A little bit earlier [in] the discussion of the Athenians' view toward Cleon it was said that they were happy for Cleon to take up the charge at Pylos, because if he were killed, and so on. And it was interpreted at that time that this meant that this particular group of Athenians felt domestic policy took precedence over foreign policy.

LS: More simply and perhaps more cautiously stated, they regarded good order of the *polis* as more important than victory in foreign wars.

Same Student: You make it harder for me, but any way, in this dialogue one of the points which the Melians bring up is that if you Athenians act this way then you will give a law to others to continue the same way.

LS: Yes, but this discussion deals entirely with the relations between cities, not on the effects this has on the life within the city.

Same Student: But my argument would be—this is what I'm driving at. What you say is right, but the Melians want them to view foreign policy in terms of domestic policy.

LS: That is in a way true. The common good of all cities, so that all cities form a community[12] in a way, just as the *polis* is a community of individuals, that is true. That is very good.

Student: Then you admit this; then it creates some problems.

LS: That is very good, what you say. In other words, what the Melians say [is that] they are the only people who oppose explicitly the Athenians' principle. You will recall that. They are the only ones. It amounts to this, that the *polis* is just as much a member of a community as the individual. In other words, the *polis* is as much under a law—not just the positive law of this or that treaty—as the individual. That is true. That is true.

Student: Where is that paragraph?

LS: Where he speaks of the common good, when they speak of the common good, and this is the implication. The Athenians say there is a common good between Athens and Melos, or here and there, but there is not a common good in general, universally, for all cities which would lead to principles of justice to which all cities have to bow. The question of the barbarians is completely out of it; it is completely out. It would have to be taken up also in a truly philosophic discussion, but this is not necessary for our purpose here. And so that is correct. We would have two extremes, then: on the one extreme are the Melians who say all men, individuals as well as cities, are subject to a higher law, are all members of one community; and at the other pole we would have the position of Thrasymachus, Callicles, as crudely understood: each man for himself, each individual; justice is sheer nonsense or a mere convenience without intrinsic validity. And the intermediate position is that no, the individual is essentially a member of the *polis*, and this means there are certain rules of justice which apply to all fellow citizens—I mean, which depend not merely on positive law. But the *polis* as *polis* is not subject to any higher law. This is the view. Now I believe the middle view is the view of Thucydides, but with this crucial understanding: while justice as justice does not apply to the *polis* except in the limited sense—compliance with treaties and this kind of thing—there is of course the important consideration between a prudent and imprudent foreign policy, prudent now strictly in the sense of a mere calculation. And that is the minimum which he would say; whether we behave like a madman like Cleon or whether we behave like Pericles makes all the difference. But he would go beyond that, I think, although I could not at the moment call chapter and verse, that he would say a long-range calculation will

not be a habit with a city or with a statesman if it is not more than calculation. In other words, if they are not moderate, if there is not an habitual restraint on the desire to have more. You know a mere cold-blooded calculator without any restraint, habitual restraint, will not be able consistently to calculate.

Student: Aren't you mixing up the concept of justice with restraint, which in Greek is distinct?

LS: Moderation would be the word, and not . . .

Student: Apparently the thing before Sicily was not to imply that they received the rewards of injustice [. . .]

LS: Sure, but *sōphrosynē* is surely used as the opposite to *hubris*, but it can also be used in opposition to . . .

Student: But it is not a question of injustice as we think of it. *Hubris* is an act improper to yourself—

LS: Well, that is hard to say, but I am willing to take it up on this basis, because this is, if I am not mistaken, the argument of Plato's *Republic*, an important part of it, namely, that one could make a case for justice very simply and crudely on the basis of [the] mere self-interest of each individual—you know, if you want to live in reasonable security—and therefore we submit to law and a police force and that kind of thing. And therefore, in brief, the *polis*, like a band of robbers, peace among themselves, [*en allēlois*]: among themselves, but no obligations whatsoever to outsiders.[xxii] That is possible. Now this is the lowest position you can take, but it is also the minimum position you must take. That is developed in the discussion between Socrates and Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*.

And now the argument proceeds as follows, not the visible argument, but when you think of it, it comes to light. The question is: What is the essential difference between the gangs of robbers and the *polis*? We all divine that there is a difference, but how is this to . . . And there are two ways of making the distinction, and both are visualized by Plato. One is that the *polis* is as much subject to rules of justice—that means the *polis* is a part of a larger whole, it amounts to the same—and the other is no, the good *polis* owes it to herself not to behave like a pig. And I think the Platonic answer is the latter. That is true. But I hesitate very much to speak about "the Greeks." You see, it is very hard. We have, after all, chiefly—and from the classical period we have only these great works going back to Homer. But, I mean that is very hard to say, what a simple pious man thought of mere frivolous killing of women and children, burning down of cities and things of that order.

Same Student: One argument is, you see, that it was not frivolous killing but that it was just punishment for *hubris* on the part of the Melians for daring to step outside of their natural role—

[xxii] See Plato, *Republic* 351c-d.

LS: Well, maybe some people saw it that way. It is certain that the Athenian ambassadors did not say a word to that effect. The Athenians only say you are fools; they don't say you are filled with insolent pride. They don't turn about the argument and say: You are the ones who fight against the gods, disobeying the law of the stronger. They don't say that; and I don't believe anyone would say they are men of *hubris*. The question is only whether this noble action, undeniably noble action was not so unwise that from a very strict point of view one could question its nobility. But it would be of such an inhuman strictness, it is better not to express it.

Student: I would like to question the idea of *hubris*, which seemed to me to be stretching it a bit unless the gods are involved.

Student: But the gods were neutral. This is the point. They keep the system going, but they don't interfere with the system.

LS: That is not quite true. We have seen that Apollo interferes very much with the system.

Same Student: I don't think Apollo really enters in—

LS: Well, I am speaking now of average beliefs. We are not speaking of what Thucydides believed or what you would believe, this is not the [point]. I also would assume that the Athenians would not have accepted the statement of the Delphic god as an unsuborned statement. I believe there would be such a glaring conflict between the Athenian patriotism and their piety that in a pinch they would have chosen patriotism rather than piety, as cities ordinarily do. That is quite true. And in addition, one could of course say, in favor of your position, that Apollo's action would probably have been traced, if developed, to some breach of some sacred law on the part of the Athenians. That is quite true.

Student: The *hubris*, though, of stepping out of line usually has some reference to some divine standard of a moral kind [other] than simply the kind of rule of the stronger, the law which the Athenians bring out as the way the gods behave. The way the Athenians present it it has no moral content at all, as far as I can see, and without some moral content it seems to me that you can't use the notion of *hubris*.

Student: Yes, but the whole "know thyself" [. . .] was based on the Greek awareness that you could never know where your limit lay—

LS: We always introduce these unknown manners of the Greeks. And here we have the Athenians at Melos, and we also have Thucydides. But surely our next source and the most accessible statement is that of the Athenian ambassadors, and there is no question that they do not accuse the Melians of *hubris*. There is no question. You see, [that] they as the weaker in a hopeless position are willing to fight against the stronger is not *hubris*, but plain folly. We use the word moral, as the questioner just did and as everyone has

done today, and it is meaningful, but we must only make clear that [what] we call moral consists of two elements—I mean, there is no Greek word for moral, you know that; the man who coined the word was Aristotle, *ta ēthika.* In Plato it never occurred, and still less in Thucydides. And with Aristotle it occurs chiefly in the context of moral virtue. I mean, Aristotle wouldn't say an action is immoral; he would say it is bad, or horrid, you know. It is just as in former times no one would speak of "unaesthetic" things; they would say "ugly things." Or they would say "nonsense," but not "illogical." We take our terms of praise and blame from the sciences, if I may say so, dealing with truth (logic), with the good (ethics), and with the beautiful (aesthetics), instead of speaking directly. But now the Greek words which one would have used are "just" and "noble"; there is no word which comprises them both. I mean, sometimes each can be enlarged upon by the other, but there is no simple word "virtue." Now the difference is clear. The just is not necessarily noble, which doesn't mean that it is ignoble. A simple example:f you pay your debt, it is just, but it is not a noble action; if someone went around saying, "Look, what a noble action I have performed by paying my debt"—. To undergo capital punishment, if deserved, is a just action, but no one would say it is a noble action. Even to go to jail is a just action. So there is a real difference.

It is a bit indicated in our times when you speak of "beyond the call of duty"; that is surely noble. And what is within the call of duty is just. It is interesting. And then there is another term, [*hosion*] in Greek, which means the divinely permitted. The divinely permitted. And that of course has clearly the relation to the gods. It can of course apply, for example . . . to kill a man is of course unjust, and at the same time impious, if you translate *anosion* in that way. It is true *hosion* occurs in Thucydides, but for example in Aristotle the normal terms are the just and the noble. He uses the word *hosion* or *mē hosion* "impious," rarely; for example, when he speaks of abortion: Beyond which point is abortion impious? The rule is when the fetus is considered to [be capable of] sensation; then it is impious [. . .][xxiii]

As regards *hubris*, I think *hubris* can also be used—I know now what I wanted to say—[13]in the context in which the gods do not enter.[xxiv] It can also be both. In this way, *sōphrosunē*, moderation, can be understood as a purely human virtue without any relation to the gods at all. And in this context it has two opposites: one is *hubris*, and one is madness. They are not identical, obviously, but they indicate both in different ways the stepping beyond, but with different emphasis. But I think the main point which we agreed upon—at least if silence can be construed as consent—is that clearly Thucydides does not side either simply with the Athenians or the Melians, and the simple condemnation of the Athenians that would correspond to the Nicias point of view. The peculiar impartiality—not neutrality—of Thucydides which prevents him from identifying himself with either, that is I think the point toward which we should be led by him by the understanding of his work. But that Thucydides would have preferred, as a human being, the Melians to this

[xxiii] Aristotle *Politics* 1335b19-26.

[xxiv] As transcribed, this sentence is problematic, as it is clearly false to say that the term *hubris* can only be used in a context in which the gods do not enter. We must therefore suspect an error in the transcription.

kind of Athenians, I have no doubt about it; he was not a cruel and callous man. The Melians might have avoided this destruction.

Student: I have a conceit. In the seventh book of the *Politics* there is a discussion of—I think it is a question of [. . .] and in terms of—I'll just use my own words—in terms of a moderate foreign policy, Aristotle gives four reasons, and I think they are suggestive of some of the things which come up in the Melian dialogue [. . .] an island; another one is simply unjust—

LS: That is simply expansion just for expansion's sake.

Same Student: The third is the god who has no external—

LS: That corresponds, as far as the *polis* goes, to the island; I mean, to the island which is so well located that no navies will come around, not one of these islands which can be approached by navies as easily as [. . .][xxv]

[xxv] The transcript of this session ends here.

Session 12: February 12, 1962
Book 6, chapters 1-47

Leo Strauss: You raise a number of questions which we are not yet perhaps able to answer.[i] The important question is how important was the defeat in Sicily for the whole war, since after all Athens was perfectly willing to fight. That we can see only when we come to book 8. Now you draw a detailed analysis of the speeches of Nicias and Alcibiades. You found a contradiction in Alcibiades's saying that Sicily is weak and yet necessary for Athens. Is this a contradiction—I mean, can there not be very rich pastures, you know, which are extremely helpful for your own use and which can easily be conquered?

Student: But his point seems to be that we cannot leave unconquered a city that might be able to conquer us. And if this is his point, that is a contradiction. It is not a contradiction to say that Sicily was simply weak.

LS: I see. That makes sense, what you said. And you emphasize that he has a sound estimate of the situation in Sicily, and his policy—what was his policy? You called it moderate. I don't believe it would be called moderate by Thucydides.

Same Student: Not in terms of self-restraint, but what I mean is that on the battlefield he had a moderate policy because he was sufficiently cautious regarding what was necessary, and yet he was not so fearful that he wanted to pack up and go home.

LS: Let us call it sensible, and his sensibility consists in the fact that he tried to make the winning of the war easier by using also diplomatic means, and not like the hero Lamachus [. . .] And therefore this paradoxy—a moderate policy and yet not a moderate man—would have to be restated: a first-rate politician and general, and an intemperate man. That is, however, not a paradox; that happens more than once. We have a discussion of that in Aristotle. Do you know where that is?[ii]

Same Student: In Aristotle particularly where the young man in the best regime would be a good warrior, but not—

LS: No, no. It is a much more hard-headed discussion. Do you remember that?

Student: If a general is dishonest, he may still be a good general, but not a good treasurer.

LS: Yes. The question is: If you can't have all the good qualities combined, which are more important? For example, say the intellectual virtues [are] required, and on the other

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[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[ii] Aristotle *Politics* 1309a33-1309b40. My thanks to Robert C. Bartlett for help in tracing this reference.

hand the moral virtues. Now in the case of the general, a first-rate general, the most important thing is that he have the intellectual qualities, and if his moral qualities are not so high—at least those which are not directly related to intellectual qualities—it is not so important. But in the case of a treasurer, for example, it would be very important that he have the others. You know? This is the point. Now you spoke most extensively about Nicias's speech and found there certain difficulties and contradictions. Can you state the main point?

Student: Well, one point was that the war would bring honor to him, and my point was that since the burden of his speech is to show how dangerous the war is, then war would endanger his already good reputation, and we saw in book 5 that peace would secure his reputation.

LS: I see now. Could it not be stated more simply as follows? Nicias says in the same speech: I would have a selfish interest in the war, because I would become the general, the commander as a matter of fact; but I am nevertheless against it because it would be disastrous to Athens.

Same Student: That is what I said.

LS: That is what you said?

Same Student: It is.

LS: So in other words, how can he derive glory from a disastrous war? I believe it is that simple.

Same Student: That is more or less what I said.

LS: Now let us turn to a coherent discussion of this part and begin at the beginning. I would like to say only a word about the connection with [the] Melian dialogue, which immediately precedes. One could say that the reply to the Melian dialogue is the Sicilian disaster. That would surely be Nicias's reasoning: divine punishment for injustice and *hubris*. And one could then suggest this proportion: the Melians are to the Athenians as Nicias is to Alcibiades. In other words, the position of Nicias is close to that taken by the Melians, and the Athenians in Melos express an Alcibiadean view. And by the way, there is also—this was mentioned before in this class—there is another proportion which we must not forget: [the] Melian dialogue and this Sicilian business are related to each other like the funeral speech and the plague. These are perhaps the most dramatic sequences in the history. This one can say is the most visible lesson of the work of Thucydides as a whole; and this would only be in agreement with what we said earlier about Nicias being the primary addressee. In both cases, *hubris* followed by punishment.

But of course the difficulty is that the Sicilian disaster destroys especially Nicias, and Sicily becomes a disaster only through the recall of Alcibiades. Alcibiades's plan was from the purely political–military point of view sound, as the speaker has pointed out.

But why was Alcibiades recalled? Because he was justly suspected of *hubris* and impiety, i.e., of the very things which the Athenians in Melos revealed by their whole posture. The open impiety does lead to ruin without any action on the part of the gods. This is surely the lesson conveyed, we can say, by Thucydides; it is obviously different from Nicias's view, although in the practical consequence it agrees with Nicias.

Now let us turn to books 6 and 7. Let us read the beginning of chapter 2, which is most directly related to the issue of the Archaeology.

Reader:
It was inhabited in old time thus, and these were the nations that held it: The most ancient inhabitants in a part thereof are said to have been the Cyclopes and Laestrigones, of whose stock I have nothing to say.[iii]

LS: In Greek the "I" is emphatic: "I, for one," you could translate it.

Reader:
Let that suffice which the poets have spoken and which every particular man hath learned of them. After them, the first that appear to have dwelt therein are the Sicanians, as they say themselves, nay, before the other, as being the natural breed of the island. But the truth is, they were Iberians, and driven away by the Ligyans from the banks of Sicanus, a river on which they were seated in Iberia.

LS: You see here again the immanifest character of the ancient things. Now we come back then to the most remote past as transmitted through reports, oral reports or poetic reports—the Cyclops, for example. And Thucydides says: I know nothing about their genus, their origin, the class of beings to which they belong, and therefore I abstain from judgment. There is some connection between this invisibility of the ancient and the invisible hopes—hopes put on the invisible—of which the Melian dialogue spoke.

Then there are various other things which I myself find interesting in the sequel, where he mentions the settling together in Sicily of people coming from Troy with Greeks. That is a momentary [1][sideline]: the mortal enemies in this new situation settle together. Cities and tribes are not permanent; they pass, and all kinds of combinations are possible. The account seems to imply that originally Sicily was uninhabited, contrary to what the Sicanians say, that they were sprung from the soil. Such a large island as Sicily was uninhabited—well, many other stretches of the earth were in the oldest time uninhabited. There was a beginning of the human race which spread then from a given center or centers—or at least there were the cataclysms, you know, the recurring destructions of the human race where only sparse groups survived. This is here of course in no way developed, but indicated.

One could perhaps say, and that is an extreme suggestion, prior to man there was universal unrest. Universal unrest—you know, the thing he discussed at the beginning. So

[iii] Thucydides 6.2. Hobbes's translation reads "of whose stock and whence they came or to what place they removed I have nothing to say."

that with man the possibility of rest begins. That would of course need a much longer reflection and could be understood only by the possibility that the characteristic of man, reason or intelligence, is the true principle of rest, which is not altogether sufficient. Well, at the end of chapter 2, Thucydides, when he speaks of the coming of the Greeks, says that they sailed in by sea, which is a wholly redundant expression and surely strange, but I think it has a meaning in so far as coming by sea, sailing in by sea, is said only of the Greeks. And this indicates a difficulty of the Archaeology, where he presented sea power as fundamentally a Greek business. You know, Minos began it—there were some side glances also at Phoenician sea power—but the overall impression was that this was a Greek affair. One could say this sketch of ancient history transcends the peculiar Greek limitations of the first archaeology; it is an important correction.

Now let me turn then to the question of the war later on, at the beginning of chapter 6. Let us read the beginning.

Reader:
These were the nations, Greeks and barbarians, that inhabited Sicily. And though it were thus great, yet the Athenians longed very much to send an army against it, out of a desire to bring it all under their subjection, which was the true motive—

LS: More literally, "the truest motive," just as in 1.23.6, *alēthestatē prophasis*, "the truest cause."[iv]

Reader:
but as having withal this fair pretext of aiding their kindred and new confederates.

LS: You see, that is the distinction he made already in the first book, the truest motive and another motive. But how did he call it in the first book? That other motive which was not the truest cause. The complaints made openly, made in the open, whereas the truest cause was immanifest. This is some change. Thucydides explains now why this distinction is necessary. He didn't call it fine-sounding, the openly stated causes; he did not call them fine-sounding in the first book. Men need these fine-sounding things: the noble. According to one of these puns which the classic writers enjoyed, the Greek word for noble, *kalon*—and the pun is to link it up with the Greek word *kalein*, which means "to call," "to sound." And so men need that, but he does not explain that need. Perhaps one could say on the basis of certain observations of the Melians, the frank assertion of the principle of imperialism would mean the assertion of universal imperialism, and this would of course in itself create universal enmity. There must therefore always be a limiting principle admitted, the high-sounding ones. You remember that even Hitler had to say in a crucial situation: Only the Sudetenland, and then my ambitions will be

[iv] Strauss indicates that Thucydides employs the same Greek phrase here as in 1.23.6, a term susceptible to various interpretations including both "truest motive" and "truest cause."

satisfied.[v] But of course also the deeper reason, the effect on life within the *polis*, on the objective of the individuals, if universal greed is admitted to be the objective of the *polis*.

Now this fine sounding reason is supplied by the request of the people of Egesta to help them against [the] Selinuntians, an ally of the Syracusians. Syracuse was the most powerful city. [LS points out on a map the places involved in this chapter.][vi] Syracuse was the key enemy for Athens. Syracuse may very well become a greater power still by the defeat of the Egestaeans. Thus there would be a danger to Athens because of the kinship of the Syracusians, who were Dorians, to the Spartans, Corinthians, and so on, who also were Dorians. The situation is this: the Egestaeans come to the Athenians just as in the beginning the Corinthians came to Sparta, just as the Spartans were driven into an allegedly defensive but legally unjust war against Athens for the Corinthians, the Athenians are driven into an allegedly defensive but unjust war against Syracuse and her allies. Yet was the Athenian war against Syracuse legally unjust? That would have to be considered.

There is of course also a kinship of the Egestaeans' request with that of the Corcyraeans at the beginning, remember? The Athenians, however, decide to send sixty galleys to Sicily under the command of Alcibiades, Nicias, and Lamachus. Nicias is against the expedition and is elected general against his will. Now when we come to Nicias's speech—let us read the remark of Thucydides immediately preceding Nicias's speech and the beginning of the speech.

Reader:
But Nicias, having heard that himself was chosen for one of the generals, and conceiving that the state had not well resolved, but affected the conquest of all Sicily, a great matter, upon small and superficial pretences, stood forth, desiring to have altered this the Athenians' purpose, and spake as followeth:

"Though this assembly was called to deliberate of our preparation and of the manner how to set forth our fleet for Sicily, yet to me it seemeth that we ought rather once again to consult whether it be not better not to send it at all than, upon a short deliberation in so weighty an affair and upon the credit of strangers, to draw upon ourselves an impertinent war."[vii]

LS: In other words, you see in Greek the terms are identical, used by Thucydides first and by Nicias afterwards: a short or brief deliberation, and about great affairs. Thucydides spoke of a great matter. That does not happen often, Thucydides's using in his own name identically the same words as the speaker. There is an agreement between Thucydides and Nicias here. Needless to say that the speech will also reveal the difference between Thucydides and Nicias. It would be good to go over all of the speech;

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[v] The Sudetenland was a region of interwar Czechoslovakia with a large German population; it was to Hitler's demands to annex it that the British Prime Minister Chamberlain and the French Prime Minister Daladier submitted at the Munich conference of 1938.
[vi] As noted by the transcriber.
[vii] Thucydides 6.8-9.

of course it could not be done properly on the basis of any translation, to see if there is any strict parallel to that, that Thucydides uses before his speech the same terms as the speaker.

Now Nicias speaks against the war, although he will receive honor from it for he is made one of the three generals. And he is not afraid of danger, danger to his life and also of course to his very large possessions. In other words, he does not think of his private good, which would make him interested in going out to Sicily, but only of the common good. You will find an interesting discussion of this argument in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, book 3, chapter 16. But in the case of Machiavelli, you will have similar difficulties as in the case of Thucydides; you have to go deeper into the argument. Machiavelli uses as his context the complicated relation between private and public interest.

Nicias continues. So he would receive honor from the assignment and he is not afraid of danger, although, he adds, to think of the danger is by no means improper; one should think of it. But, we would say, should we not think more of honor, especially a general? And how can one derive honor as a general from an ill-conceived expedition? So in fact, his private interest is in full agreement with the public interest as he understands it. One could rather say, to draw the conclusion[2], that this private interest is an interest not only in the preservation of his acquired reputation, but also he is afraid of the danger. And this is in conformity with what was said at book 5, chapter 16.

Same Student: I also made the point that this has some relation to his desire to persuade the *demos*, and that he doesn't want to frankly admit that it is going to be dangerous for him. Because on his own principle of attacking Alcibiades on the grounds of pursuing his private interest, he doesn't want himself to be vulnerable to this kind of attack.

LS: That is true, but he isn't very practical there, as we shall see. In other words, this is an introduction. He adds, however, that he has no hope to persuade the Athenians [away] from their plans; he says, in other words, that I know that my speech will be weak and ineffective. The manner, the character of the Athenians is too strong for him. They are bent on having more and dissatisfied with what is available. The term used, *hyparchonta,* got later on a technical meaning after Aristotle and is the basis of the traditional term, now so famous, "existence," "the existing." There is no such expression in Plato and Aristotle that would be the things which are as distinct from the things which have been and which will be. The things which are available. In other words, these are exactly the terms used in the other way around of the Spartans. The Spartans are satisfied with the available and are not concerned with more at 1.70.

Nicias is satisfied with the available things: his life, his wealth—he was one of the richest men in Athens—and his fame. His private good differs from the common good as understood by the community, not from the true common good, and the difference is that his understanding of the common good is not the common good as understood by the city of Athens at large. We see here why he is ineffective and why Pericles was so effective. Pericles's private good agreed with the common good as understood by the community, and that is the basis of the eulogy in book 2, chapter 65. Let us now look at Alcibiades.

His private good agrees with the common good as understood by the community until the affairs with the *hermai*—you know, the mutilation of the Hermes statues.

But let us continue with Nicias's speech. The Athenians' desire for more leads them to take risks about the invisible and future things in contradistinction to the available and visible things. Now this is very interesting because this is the very antithesis used in the Melian dialogue, especially in chapter 113 of book 5. The Melians took such risks in the view of the Athenian ambassadors. They did not base themselves on the available but put their faith on the immanifest or invisible and future. So the extremes touch the Melians and the Athenians, but of course in very different ways. I mean, the Athenians do not put their trust in the gods as the Melians do but in their own power and ultimately, of course, in chance—that *tychē* will not act against them. The question which we have to consider in the light of later developments is this: Does not Nicias in another way put his trust in the immanifest and future? That we must see, mainly for this reason: he eventually accepts the generalship although he knows that the expedition is hopeless. Is not this virtuous act, as it appears to him, based on his trust in the invisible and future things?

But let us continue with the speech. The Athenians have already many enemies in Greece itself, and she will drag other enemies hither by her going to Sicily. The implication: for she will fail in Sicily. He is completely silent about the possibility of victory; he is a radical defeatist in this speech. The peace, the present peace, is unstable, not having been glorious for either side, but more inglorious for Sparta. This was Nicias's own peace, you must not forget. "We Athenians tried to right a wrong which was done to Egesta, while we have not righted the wrong done to us by our allies who deserted us in the north. If the Syracusans would make themselves master of [the] whole of Sicily, she would be less of a danger to us than she is now for then she would be afraid that by helping Sparta to destroy us, she would enable Sparta to destroy her." That is a somewhat strange argument. It surely would lead to the conclusion that he does not bring out: the next step would not be that Sparta would destroy Sicily but that the conquest of Sicily by Syracuse does constitute a danger to Athens. This he admits without being aware of it. We should stay away from Sicily, or at most only make a show of power there for a short while and then leave, for there exists at present an opinion of our very great power, and this opinion protects us. He implies, I take it, that this opinion of our very great power will restrain the Syracusians: "At present the Syracusians fear us owing to our reputation. Let us preserve our reputation, and let us draw all possible benefit from it. Let Athens act as I, Nicias, act"—you remember what Thucydides said about Nicias's motive in book 5. "But if we meet a failure in Sicily they will come to the Spartans here against us, for they will act exactly as you did. You were afraid of Sparta, but then against your expectations you defeated them; and hence, despising the Spartans, you plan to move against Sicily. We must fear Sparta, an oligarchy, threatening our democracy, and therefore abstain from the Sicilian adventure."

Then he turns to discrediting the Egestaeans, and above all Alcibiades. Alcibiades is guided only by consideration of his own benefit. He has ruined himself by the ponies, and seeks to get out of it by generalship and to become privately famous through the danger of Athens. The whole affair is too big for a young man, both as regards counsel and sharp

action—what would now be called energetic action, which is quite strange because energetic action is not so alien to the young as wise counsel may be. Let us not repeat our mistake—I believe he refers to Corcyra. He admits that there is a slight illegality in what he proposes; the reversal of the decision of last time is slightly illegal. But even the very correct Nicias thinks that a slight illegality is not so important in a matter of such gravity. Still, we must keep this in mind.

Now before we go on, which points which you brought out in the Nicias speech did I disregard?

Same Student: I made the point that if Nicias was right both as to the lack of necessity and as to the danger, then this does not really present a moral question.

LS: That I see now. It is somewhat illegitimate to bring it up where we are discussing the issue now as presented by Thucydides, and here the moral issue does not enter—I mean, the whole question of the justice of expansion is not brought up by either side. Nicias also argues entirely on grounds of expediency.

Same Student: Yes, but it seems to have been explicit in all our discussion.

LS: Yes, but you see rightly to the extent to which Thucydides draws our attention to this issue by certain allusions, but this does not necessarily mean that it is present on every level, you know, and I have observed before that the moral issue comes up as such only in the discussion with the Melians and no other discussions. For example, when the question of Mytilene was discussed, Diodotus explicitly excludes considerations of justice. And you would have to show by argument that the moral issue is present here by what appears in the speeches. Now surely it does not appear—the issue of justice does not come up in other speeches; for example, later on when Alcibiades is in Sparta he has to say a lot about justice because he behaves like a terrible traitor against his own country, and therefore he must prove that it is just to become a traitor to one's country, but here the question does not arise. The question is simply: Athens has no obligations to Syracuse. She may enter, if she pleases, relations with Egesta, and that will lead to a war with the Selinuntians and therefore also with Syracuse, but that she is free to do. And the question is only the expediency not only of expansionism in general but of this particular act of expansion at this time. And here Nicias argues only against that, just as Alcibiades does not bring up here the issue.

Now in chapter 15 we see that Thucydides agrees with Nicias regarding Alcibiades's character. And in the sequel of chapter 15—I think we should read that, the second half of chapter 15, where he analyses how Alcibiades's character became responsible for the ruin of Athens.

Reader:
For being in great estimation with the citizens, his desires were more vast than for the proportion of his estate—

LS: No, for "the available estate": the available estate as distinguished from the expected or hoped for, you know.

Reader:
both in maintaining of horses and other his expenses, was meet; which proved afterwards none of the least causes of the subversion of the Athenian commonwealth. For most men fearing him, both for his excess in things that—

LS: Not "most men." The Greek word is *hoi polloi*, "the many," which has a definite political connotation.

Reader:
concerned his person and form of life and for the greatness of his spirit in every particular action he undertook, as one that aspired to the tyranny, they became his enemy. And although for the public he excellently managed the war, yet every man, privately displeased with his course of life, gave the charge of the wars to others, and thereby not long after overthrew the state.[viii]

LS: Now let us see. Who overthrew the city? Who overthrew the city? The many—the many, not Alcibiades. Now let's see. Alcibiades was feared by the many because of the greatness of his private—well, illegality [*paranomias*], his action against the *nomos*, which does not necessarily mean criminal acts, but it means simply impropriety—you know, he didn't behave well. They fear him because of the greatness of his private, say, illegality, and because of the greatness of his mind, [*dianoias*], and hence they suspect him of tyrannical desires. You know he was clever enough to become a tyrant, and he was intemperate enough to have these sorts of desires which only a tyrannical man can satisfy. Although his military dispositions were excellent and recognized as such publicly, privately the individuals disliked and distrusted him and therefore turned to other leaders. Not Alcibiades, but the many, overturned the *polis*.

Student: Where Hobbes in his translation uses "every man," is that the same as *hoi polloi*?

LS: "Each," *hekastoi.*

Same Student: "And although for the public he excellently managed the war, yet every man"—

LS: Let me see, where is that?

Same Student: The last sentence in 15.[ix]

LS: "Each by himself"; but this must be understood properly: "of these many."

[viii] Thucydides 6.15.
[ix] The student seems to mean the penultimate sentence.

Yet Alcibiades's private conduct and thought induced the many to distrust and hate him. Shortly before, in the same chapter 15—let us read the first part of chapter 15.

Reader:
Thus spake Nicias. But the most of the Athenians that spake after him were of opinion that the voyage ought to proceed, the decree already made not to be reversed; yet some there were that said to the contrary. But the expedition was most of all pressed by Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias, both out of desire that he had to cross Nicias, with whom he was likewise at odds in other points of state, and also for that he had glanced at him invidiously in his oration—

LS: The word ordinarily means "calumniate," "in a calumniating manner," but that is perhaps too strong here said of Nicias. "In a manner openly deprecating him."

Reader:
but principally for that he affected to have charge, hoping that himself should be the man to subdue both Sicily and Carthage to the state of Athens, and withal, if it succeeded, to increase his own private wealth and glory.

LS: In other words, in Alcibiades's opinion there is perfect agreement between his self-interest and the public interest. But what I want to say is that Nicias had mentioned Alcibiades calumniatingly. Now Nicias confirms the distrust of the Athenians against Alcibiades, most powerfully. He thus lays the ground of the violent reaction to the affair regarding the *hermai* and hence to the recall of Alcibiades. He publicly questions the reliability of Alcibiades as his fellow commander, which will be fatal to the expedition if Alcibiades and Nicias become fellow commanders. And Nicias knows it, in a way, that this is going to happen, because he says—that was said at the beginning by Thucydides, no, by Nicias himself—that he knows the inclinations of the Athenians and that his speech will be ineffective. Nicias ought to have spoken against the expedition and declared that if nominated he will not run and if elected he will not serve, but not have made a personal attack on Alcibiades since he knew that his speech would be ineffective.

That is very important, you know; that is a very great responsibility which Nicias undergoes with the best of intention, and it has something to do with the subject brought up by Diodotus, speaking against Cleon when Cleon had calumniated the people who might speak in favor of Mytilene: "Don't do that; don't commit character assassinations." Well, that is, by the way, not a bad word, a bad expression. Nicias assassinates the character of Alcibiades, for very good reasons and he was justified in that, but in this situation, with the very near danger that Athens will decide on the expedition and will make this man the commander together with him—they had already decided on that—it was a very great mistake. If one tried to analyze the motives of Nicias, one could say—and I think this was also mentioned by the speaker—in his speech Nicias speaks of the peculiar weakness of the older and wiser men; they are ashamed of appearing to be soft, remember, cowardly. And this somehow enters Nicias's own situation. Now let us then turn to Alcibiades's speech.

Student: At the very end of Nicias's speech, at the very last sentence: "And he truly dischargeth the duty of a president who laboureth to do his country the most good, or at least will not willingly do it hurt."[x] He is appealing to the president to bring the question up once again. I feel that the standard that Nicias is requesting of the president is a very low one here: he's requesting that in order to truly discharge the duty of a president that you must at least not willingly do us hurt, which is a very low standard.

LS: That is very good, what you say. That applies to Nicias himself; he surely does not voluntarily hurt Athens, but involuntarily he does so. That is good. I would say that this, indeed, is very good, and it is very beautiful of Thucydides to make these the last words of Nicias.

Same Student: Do you think there is a contradiction where Nicias assassinates Alcibiades's character?

LS: Well, I have to ask everyone for forgiveness that I introduce such a terrific word and apply it to Nicias, but we have to make things clear.

Same Student: Well, in any case, he contradicts himself, because he says that you shouldn't look at a man's private interest but rather at the public interest because by pursuing his private interest he might also benefit the public. Then he turns around later in the speech and attacks Alcibiades for pursuing his private interest.

LS: In other words, that is in a way a very hard question. There are clearly situations possible in which one must say of a man whose political proposals one disapproves [that] one must trace them to private motives. It might be necessary. All these things depend on the circumstances, and in these particular circumstances it showed a grave lack of *gnōmē*, as Thucydides calls it, of understanding, of judgment on the part of Nicias. And you will agree with me that however high the praise of Nicias is later on at the end of the seventh book, Nicias is never praised [as] *phronimos*, as a man of judgment. Of course we must not create the wrong notion. Nicias had probably better judgment than almost everyone—I do not exclude myself but exclude those among you that believe you have better judgment than Nicias. I mean, that is clear. Fortunately, we are not on the dissection table, only Nicias and the other characters are, but so that we may become better on some points than we were before.

Student: This reminds me of an old point about Nicias. If the book is written for Niciases, as was suggested, this is just what it does. It says: Here are the problems for this kind of virtuous man. Here is what happened to him; see if you can improve yourself from his example.

LS: You stated it incompletely. We said that Nicias is the *primary* addressee. You see, the trouble with judgment is that it cannot be learned. Well, it can be helped, you know; it can be helped by the proper looking around, which includes also looking around in Thucydides, but if someone does not have a native capacity for judgment, he will not

[x] Thucydides 6.14.

acquire it except when it is too late. You know? I mean, Nicias the primary addressee, that means that Thucydides would be very anxious to have in every city a stratum of Niciases in rather responsible positions. But if possible they should never be in the leading positions, you see. Of course there is no prescription which will guarantee it; one can only say men like Pericles are much more capable to be at the helm than Nicias.

Student: Sort of a civil servant.

LS: How did Khrushchev put it? "Bureaucrat"? Only this expression is improper here, but surely "second in command," I believe some people call it. You know he did very well as a general; he did better than Demosthenes, in a way, although Demosthenes was surely a man of better judgment. Nicias would not have made the blunder which Demosthenes made, but Demosthenes was a quick learner and that may be better than to have an impeccable record as Nicias did. Now we must proceed according to chapters.

Student: I wonder if we can't carry this a bit futher. It has seemed to me in this paragraph here that [what] we were looking at is a bit of a puzzle. If Nicias comes forward and attacks—the basic thing is that the popular distrust of Alcibiades, from the way I read this, it predates anything that Nicias may say on this occasion, it goes a long way back. Nicias thought the populace already had this opinion of Alcibiades. The puzzle then [be]comes: Why did the people vote "yes" to go to Sicily? And perhaps, if I could just say beyond that, this point of Nicias's—it is not necessarily that he is wrong to do this, but is it possible that in fact in terms of—rhetorically it is disadvantageous to him to do this, because of something in the Athenian demos. That if he hadn't attacked Alcibiades personally they might have paid more attention to his serious arguments; they sort of rallied to the other side.

LS: I doubt that. I would say there was the prejudice against Alcibiades, but there is a very great difference between a widespread feeling and that a most respectable man puts his stamp on it in an official speech. I mean, I do not remember a contemporary example, but if you would compare, for example, the public utterances of Churchill regarding Chamberlain's policy to Hitler, that was no attempt to degrade Chamberlain. There may be cases where it is necessary (one can never speak universally on such things), but in this case it was not necessary. I do not believe that this was a—I mean, it was a mistake of his in the long run, but no one could foresee that, the *hermai* business. But otherwise—there is another part of your argument which I forgot.

Same Student: Why did the Athenians vote—

LS: They were so much bent on it, you know.

Same Student: There is another factor, though, in that Nicias and Alcibiades were both of the few—that is, they were not of the many—but Alcibiades was of the Alcmaeonids, and the Alcmaeonids were the group that were identified with the growth of Athens as a *polis* founded on the many. In other words, by attacking him in public Nicias may have identified himself with the nondemocratic group.

LS: More simply stated, Alcibiades was the nephew of Pericles. And Nicias was surely a bit suspected of pro-Spartan leanings, you know. These pro-Spartan leanings came in very handy at the time of the Nicias peace, but this was not forgotten now, and then people found this peace most unsatisfactory. You are quite right; the halo of Pericles helped Alcibiades very much. Well, he is very wayward, and Pericles never did these things, you know, which he did, but he is a very able fellow and we still see that he is, how do you say it, from the same trunk, fundamentally what we like. A democratic empire, that is his family inheritance. You know this point. But that would not do away with the point I made, you know, that he lays the foundation. Later on, when the *hermai* affair comes up—well, Nicias said it in assembly and of course it was never refuted.

Same Student: With due respect, I'd like to suggest that Nicias did not fully believe that he could not convince the crowd, because in certain other accounts of Nicas he presents himself as a man who feels that he has some sort of convincing power. And if he really believed that he couldn't convince the *demos* to change their minds, then I wonder why he would even have attempted to speak to them.

LS: Well, he was an honest man, and he did not wish a disastrous decision to be stuck to without a contradiction. But don't you think that it is generally true that the most foolish thing you can do in a popular assembly when attacking a proposal [is] to say, "Well, I'm sure I'm going to lose"? I believe this is not—unless it is completely overlaid by statements to the opposite effect in a very powerful peroration, that is all right, but nothing of this kind.

Same Student: It might be wondered if this was not, being given his character and the fact that he knew that he had a good character, that he might have said: Well, I'm sure going to be beaten because I am not a good orator like other people, but my ideas are good nonetheless.

LS: But he doesn't say, "I am not a good orator"; he does not say that. Someone can say: "I can't keep up with these sophisticated fellows like Alcibiades; I am a simple man of the people," you know, and this kind of thing. That can be very effective, but that is not what he does. Of course Nicias is extremely interesting, but we cannot—a clear picture of him emerges from Thucydides, but we are all helped, I think, when we consider the two other classic presentations, namely, Aristophanes's *Knights*, where he appears together with Demosthenes, with our Demosthenes, as slaves of the *demos*. And Demosthenes is by far superior, by far superior. And also in Plato's *Laches*, where Nicias appears as the sophisticated man compared with the tough Laches, and that means also a certain weakness, a certain lack of energy, as people would call it today, and that I think goes through all presentations. And how this is developed and deepened, this analysis, this is different in the three cases.

Student: Quite a long time ago you made the remark when talking about Niciases being the primary addressees. I'd say even on this level I'd suggest two other candidates for primary addressees: Brasidas and Tissaphernes.[xi]

LS: Brasidas makes sense.

Same Student: Brasidas, yes, because he was a man who liked Athenian things; he was an Athenian type of individual.

LS: Yes, and there is this other thing which we discussed extracurricularly, you and I: there are only two heroes in Thucydides who have the maximum number of speeches—five—Nicias and Brasidas. That is of some interest.

Same Student: And Tissaphernes for the same reason—

LS: That I believe is not such a good idea. Now let us turn to Alcibiades's speech. He begins as the magnanimous man in Aristotle's sense; you know, the man claiming high honors and deserving them, at least in his own opinion: What brings me reputation, the horses and other things, brings the city benefit, i.e., reputation of power. My victories at Olympia bring conventional honor, the honor based on convention, because it is a mere conventional thing that winning these races should bring honor. But they carry with them the suspicion of power. (He does not say here of his power or of Athenian power.) Of course I am envied[3] [for] my display,[4] [for] my conspicuous consumption, which of course is not a matter of consumption merely, but you understand. I am envied by my fellow citizens for this, and this is by nature. (In other words, that cannot be helped.) But these displays show strength to the foreigners, and that is of importance to the *polis*. By thinking of my glory or honor I do a service to the city. (But this concern with superiority is undemocratic and hence unjust.) "No," Alcibiades says, "everyone admits, in a democracy as well as elsewhere, the inner qualities of those who do well (I mean, in the sense of being rich and powerful) and of those people in misery, and act accordingly. This inner quality is perfectly compatible with democracy because it cannot be changed. I mean that people envy those who do well and come to despise those who live in misery; that is human nature, that is not undemocratic." There is a recognition of equality in this very fact, because this envy and contempt applies especially to those to whom one is similar. It is the old story[5] regarding enemies: potter envies potter. Say a potter would not as such envy a [. . .] A potter would not as such envy a general, you know. That is an interesting theme, by the way, the question of envy, but it would lead us much too far [afield] here.[xii]

Envy takes place only among equals, ordinarily at least, and therefore also the opposite of envy, the slighting is more there, and therefore there is nothing undemocratic about this concern with superiority and the attempt to avoid inferiority. But after their deaths, the superior and admired and envied men are proudly claimed by their cities, so that shows

[xi] The tape was changed at this point.
[xii] In this paragraph, the parenthetical references are Strauss's interpolations within his summary of the speeches.

that what I do is perfectly compatible with a democratic city. The ultimate ground of Alcibiades is again eternal glory, just as in the case of Pericles: "There is perfect harmony between myself and the interest of the *polis*. The very victory of the Spartans at Mantineia—you know, the greatest victory, which was apparently a refutation of my policy toward Argos—proves it. For the first time the Spartans had to risk their everything on a single day. My seemingly unnatural defects (I mean, he doesn't refer here to unnatural vices which he may or may not have had, I mean, the acts in such an illegal manner)—my seemingly unnatural defects have been beneficial to the city. But to the extent to which they are defects (Mantineia was a defeat) the remedy is the combination Alcibiades and Nicias. That I have some great virtues, you admit. I also have some great vices . . . I grant you. But there is only one remedy, the combination which you decided yesterday. Because what is the supreme virtue of Nicias? That he is always lucky. I have been defeated at Mantineia, although this defeat resounds to Athens' honor. All right, so you are afraid that I might make blunders. But Nicias, he is always *eutychēs,* a man of good luck in war as well as in private life. Think of my debts and his wealth." And then he shows why Sicily can be easily conquered: the racial heterogeneity of the populace; hence no patriotism proper. There is no danger for us in Greece thanks to our naval power. The utmost the Spartans can do is to invade Attica. One must wonder at this point why he does not think of Argos here—you know, his famous alliance. Why would Sparta not be restrained by Argos from invading Attica as she had done in the first war? I think that he has in mind that the Argive hoplites will be needed for the Sicilian expedition. You know, that is much more important than the invasion of Attica; they are accustomed to it, it is a minor inconvenience which doesn't affect the empire. "We have no reason for not helping our Sicilian allies. The extension of empire is indispensable for those who possess an empire. Nicias's *apragmosynē*, his disinclination to active life, or life of expansion, is out of place. The cooperation of the old and the young (you know Nicias had put the old against the young, and said to the old, 'You vote with my proposal, the young will go with Alcibiades anyway')—the co-operation of old and young is the very basis of our prosperity. The mixture of the low, the middle, and the most wise, is the strongest." He ironically grants that the oldest are the wisest, the most precise, the most exact.[xiii]

Student: In terms of rhetoric, would you think that this was relative to Alcibades's position? The appeal to the *demos* to identify themselves wholly with the city, whereas the few would be regarded as those who were the bane of all that we're talking about in the city. Rhetorically this would appeal [. . .] to the unity of the city—

LS: Sure, there is no question. That is also—rest is ruinous to everything, especially regarding knowledge, knowledge. So in other words, that is a dig at Nicias. You know, if you are not active, your knowledge will rot, will decay. Motion increases experience and the capacity for defense. Whatever may be true in an inactive city, in Sparta ours is not an inactive city, and we cannot change without ruin our present characters and laws, even if they should be inferior to those of an inactive city. That is a very conceited salvation of

[xiii] In this paragraph, the parenthetical references are Strauss's interpolations within his summary of the speeches.

his conscience, because he was not such a hundred-per-cent democrat as he would like to appear, as we shall see later.

Now the parallel shows certain agreements between Alcibiades and Pericles, and even Cleon. Cleon also enlarged on this point—the Athenian heritage of activity and expansion and daring. And Nicias is excluded from this line, clearly. A certain levity of the speech is observable. No believable proof of the possibility of the expedition. Now Alcibiades has spoken, Nicias's only hope is to deter the Athenians from the expedition by showing to them the magnitude of the requirements for the success. And this, I believe, is another great blunder of Nicias. Without knowing it, he shows the Athenians how the enterprise would be possible, and by this very fact the wisdom, the extreme wisdom of the Athenian people of combining Alcibiades's eagerness and Nicias's experience. And Thucydides's sober judgment in chapter 24: the opposite of what Nicias planned happened to him, the opposite. He fails completely. That is in chapter 24. It is clear that Nicias is prepared to lead the expedition. This is even the implication of this long speech, you know, this long speech, "that I am willing to lead the expedition if you do these and these things." And the Athenians in their zeal say, "Of course we can do it."

Now let us look, take a brief look at the second speech of Nicias, chapter 23.

Student: In line with what you were saying, the actual size of the expedition, as Nicias points it out, in a way increases the amount of motion necessary to accomplish the deed. And this falls in line with Thucydides's analysis of motion: the greater the magnitude of the expedition, the more motion required.

LS: This, if I may say so, sounds a bit "abstract." I mean, do we understand the situation better? That the overall identification of motion with Athens and rest with Sparta, and therefore also with the cautious manner of Nicias with rest, and the expansionist Alcibiades with motion is, I think, defensible, and even necessary. But what do we gain by that? I don't think we gain a thing, because here we have another case, namely, a man who is on the side of rest and not very effective.

Same Student: It just enlarges the blunder.

LS: I see, yes.

Student: I am not so certain that it was only because of Nicias that they enlarged the expedition, because it seemed to me that Alcibiades was a sound general, a sound observer of the situation. He probably would not have been satisfied himself—

LS: I think that is by no means clear. When you read the memoirs of Lord Alanbrooke,[xiv] then you see how many great errors of the logistic kind Churchill would have committed if he had not had such very experienced men to do the detailed [. . .] And I think that

[xiv] Alan Brooke (Baron then Viscount Alanbrooke from 1946) (1883-1963), professional soldier, Imperial Chief of Staff, Field Marshal from January 1944, Churchill's chief military advisor, who often clashed with him as revealed in his subsequent Memoirs.

Nicias made a major contribution to the progress of the—but in a somewhat left-handed way. Let us read the beginning of his speech, which is a very revealing one.

Reader:
"Men of Athens, forasmuch as I see you violently bent on this expedition, such effect may it take as is desired. Nevertheless I shall now deliver my opinion upon the matter—[xv]

LS: No no, that is not quite right. "Since I see you altogether bent on this expedition, in order to bring about what we wish." In other words, he identifies himself with the wish of the Athenians, and that is clear also from the end of this speech. That is an interesting point.

I will mention only a few points from chapter 23. Good counsel is not enough. One needs still more good luck, and this is hard always to have for mere men. Let us rely as little as possible on luck and make sure of what is in our power. In other words, while Nicias is pious, his piety is a rational piety. You know, he is not a fantasist. And that in way is underlying the analysis of his character in the *Laches*, where what one could call the superstitious element of his thought is wholly invisible on the surface. Now the alternative in chapter 23—let us read the third sentence or so in 23.

Reader:
"We must also make account that we go to inhabit some city in that foreign and hostile country, and either the first day we come thither to be presently masters of the field, or failing, be assured to find all in hostility against us."

LS: Now that is not clear enough. The alternative is either immediately get control of the land, or knowing; the alternative is mastery or knowledge, literally. This belongs to the seemingly clumsy Thucydidean sentence. But I believe it is not clumsy at all. Alternative to victory is knowledge. Knowledge comes from failure. In the famous words of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, "from suffering comes understanding." Nicias will acquire knowledge by his failure, a knowledge which he did not have before, I think.

Now let us go on. So of course Nicias has shown the Athenians how it is possible to win the Sicilian expedition, and it becomes a final decision. And then the violation of the Hermes statues in a single night. And this impious deed has a very great effect on the Athenians. It is regarded as an ill omen for the Sicilian expedition, and at the same time as an indication of an antidemocratic conspiracy, and it is felt to be connected with other acts of *hubris* against statues and against the mysteries. Alcibiades is accused, among others. And this is used[6] [against] Alcibiades as libel by those who rival Alcibiades for the leadership of the *demos*. They assert that all this points to the destruction by Alcibiades of democracy: this, they say, confirms his nondemocratic illegality, illegality in the wide sense, acting against custom—you know, his undemocratic behavior. Alcibiades demands [an] immediate trial. Of course he expects to be cleared. But his enemies want to have the cake and to eat it, a very common human failing. The expedition would be endangered if Alcibiades were arrested now before leaving Athens.

[xv] Thucydides 6. 20.1.

They want the expedition and the destruction of Alcibiades at the same time, that is, to eat the cake and to have it.

Now Thucydides describes the great expedition of the navy, of the *stolos*, the expedition. The term applied also to Xerxes's famous *stolos*, one is reminded of that. The expedition is based on the grandest hope of the future as compared with the things available. The fundamental error underlying the expedition is the same as that of Nicias's piety. The Athenians have this hope on the invisible, but in a different way, based on their own power, or on their own good counsel, as they claim. And of course they must also hope on good luck.

Thucydides turns now to the Syracusian side. Some believe these rumors about the Athenians' coming and others don't. Hermocrates, who does not belong to the *demos*, speaks first, chapters 33 to 34. He knows that he is going to say things which are incredible, but we must be prepared for the Athenians' coming. The danger is not beyond our power to cope with it. The very largeness of their fleet will rally all Sicily against them. There is a general experience with enterprises of this kind. We may win a battle as glorious as that of Salamis. He hopes that the Athenians will make a mistake. This reminds me of a remark of a diplomat at the beginning of the First World War, which was told to me in rather trying circumstances. In 1940, after the German conquest of France—well, most of you are too young to have experienced that properly—it looked absolutely dark for the West. And I talked to an older man who was already very old when the First World War started, and he said when the former French ambassador in Berlin had already returned to France and Germans were running [over] Belgium and deep into France, and then this man said quietly, *J'attends la gaffe Allemande*: "I am waiting for the German blunder." He was sure it would come, but he didn't know when. Hermocrates's remark reminds me of that. But of course we as readers of this speech must wonder: Are the Sicilians prepared to do what the Athenians did at Salamis, namely, leave the city to the enemy and make the navy their city? You remember? Is this a thought he wishes to exclude by a very difficult remark in chapter 33? I wonder, but that would lead us too far.

It would be best to get an alliance with Carthage, also one with Sparta and Corinth. You see, these notions are very vague. At the very best, deny them by the navy access to Sicily—you know, meet them near Greece rather than in Sicily. No one believes Hermocrates. He is contradicted by Athenagoras, the then-leader of the *demos*. A symbolic name: Athena means Athens, and *agora* means to speak[xvi]—the speaker for Athens, one could almost say. Now this speech is in chapter 36 to 40. It would be excellent, Athenagoras says, if the Athenians came, but they will not come. The rumors to the contrary are a trick of our enemies at home. The Athenians are not such fools as to start a new war while they have still the Spartans on their hands. We need no preparation against Athens but rather democratic care at home. And when he gives the democratic argument in chapters 38 to the beginning of 40—unfortunately we cannot read that—but I wonder if we should not rather, at some sacrifice, read that and stop here and go on next

[xvi] The only plausible rendering of the name Athenagoras is "Spokesman for Athena." This may seem an odd construction, a human deemed the spokesman for a deity, but it is attested elsewhere; cf. Diagoras, "spokesman for Zeus" and Hermagoras "spokesman for Hermes."

time. So let us read that. We don't need to read the whole chapter 38, only the last two sentences.

Reader:
"Tell me forsooth (I have asked this question often), you that are the younger sort, what would you have?[xvii]

LS: The younger sort, *la jeunesse d'esprit*. They are of course the men, and not the younger among the people.

Reader:
Would you now bear office? The law allows it not; and the law was made because ye are not now sufficient for government, not to disgrace you when you shall be sufficient.

LS: In other words, you cannot complain. Our democracy is fair. You will have your chance, you will become magistrates, provided that you are old enough.

Reader:
But forsooth, you would not be ranked with the multitude! But what justice is it, that the same men should not have the same privileges.

"Some will say that the democracy is neither a well-governed nor a just state—

LS: "Neither sensible."

Reader:
and that the most wealthy are aptest to make the best government. But I answer first, *democracy* is a name of the whole, *oligarchy* but of a part.

LS: That is of course the crucial point of the democrats of all times. It is the government of all, and the antidemocrats would say: No, it is the rule of the part, because it is the rule of the majority and the majority are the poorer citizens. It is a simple statement.

Reader:
Next, though the rich are indeed fittest to keep the treasure, yet the wise are the best counsellors, and the multitude, upon hearing, the best judge. Now in a democracy, all these, both jointly and severally, participate equal privileges.

LS: Do you remember—does this remind you of something, this argument?

Student: Isn't this the *Politics* of Aristotle?

[xvii] Thucydides 6.38-40.

LS: Exactly, the third book, the democratic argument.[xviii]

Reader:
But in the oligarchy they allow indeed to the multitude a participation of all dangers, but in matters of profit, they not only encroach upon the multitude, but take from them and keep the whole. Which is the thing that you the rich and the younger sort affect, but in a great city cannot possibly embrace. But yet, O ye the most unwise of all men, unless you know that what you affect is evil, and if you know not that, you are the most ignorant of all the Grecians I know; or, yet most wicked of all men, if knowing if you dare do this.

"Yet I say, inform yourselves better or change your purpose and help to amplify the common good of the city, making account that the good amongst you shall not only have an equal but a greater share therein than the rest of the multitude; whereas if you will needs have all, you shall run the hazard of losing all. Away therefore with these rumors, as discovered and not allowed.

LS: Let us stop here. Now what do you say about this speech? I mean, isn't it in a way a forceful statement of the democratic principles? Then of course you must also read this speech in the light of the deeds. This man says that in a democracy reasoned foresight has its sufficient share, and now he is the leader of the *demos*. Well, he lacks foresight completely. And how is this connected with the fact that he is a man of the *demos*? Now let us make this clear. Who is likely to know better about goings on in Athens, the rich or the poor? I mean, this is a relatively simple situation. The rich, of course. So in other words, and here it is true, and the leader of the rich has the proper estimate and the leader of the *demos* has no estimate. But now, still we must however be fair: What is the net result of this discussion?

Student: Hermocrates's [. . .]

LS: So in other words, democracy is vindicated against the leader of democracy. The democracy as a whole makes sensible decisions to prepare for defense.

There is this speech of the Syracusian general, Athenagoras,[xix] which is less—I mean, he doesn't go to the length of Hermocrates's suggestion, "Let us meet the Athenians very far out, or the Athenian fleet very far out, so that we may not be in danger," but preparations are being made. This is, I think, the point where we should stop. I hope we have sufficient time next time, because next time we have only two speeches—no, three speeches, but not as many as today and I think we can cover them in one class.

[xviii] It is unclear what passage of the *Politics* Strauss has in mind, as none makes quite the argument that Athenagoras offers here, although different element of his case are scattered among various passages.

[xix] The general whom Strauss cites here is unnamed, Athenagoras being the name of the demagogue to whom this general responds.

Student: The question was raised last time about certain kinds of citizens who prefer the advantages of domestic policy over successes in foreign policy. In a way, Athenagoras states this.

LS: Yes, but in a distorted way.

Same Student: Why distorted?

LS: He does not say it is most important for us to serve our democracy, but he denies the fact, the fact or at least the serious possibility that the Athenians might come.

Same Student: [. . .] But anyway, although he was very wise about the situation at home, [. . .] but when faced with complete disaster, in other words, survival of the state in any form, your point is no good.

LS: No, I think he is shown to be, what would you call it, doctrinaire. In other words, he sees always everything in terms of the issue of the rich against the poor and has no proper estimate of other things.

Same Student: What is the alternative to that, though?

LS: Well, to see in proper proportion. There is after all a common interest of Syracuse against Athens, and in this particular situation it might so happen that Hermocrates is right.

Same Student: But what I had in mind is what is the alternative to doctrinairism on the home front; in other words, what viewpoint would he have to take in respect to his special baby, the democracy—

LS: Well, I believe there are even more than equivalents, present-day equivalents to that. You know, I could not lay my fingers on it at the moment, but, for example, you know very well that the opinion about Khrushchev and the policy of the Soviet Union now is very much linked up with the domestic dissensions. And there are people, I know some people who are not exactly in favor of unilateral disarmament—they wouldn't go so far—but people who simply minimize these dangers for domestic reasons. By the way, here is the great complication that could theoretically happen also by people who are now called conservatives, you know, and who are so fearful of the big state, the central state that they would minimize it. We have seen this also in this country. Surely you can say it was easier for Hermocrates, who was not a democrat, to see the danger threatening Syracuse at the hands of the most powerful democracy. That is true, and I believe that it is possible that Thucydides also wanted to suggest this.

Student: To go back to Alcibiades again, there is a small point which interested me, the shadow of Pericles, the implied comparison hinted at throughout. There is the point when Alcibiades is suspected of aiding a tyranny, and then in going back in book 2, we have his—Thucydides's —comment that in Pericles's time you didn't have a tyranny, but you

did have in fact a one man government. It would sound like the same thing, but somehow it was different—

LS: Yes, because very possibly he used the term monarchy, not tyranny. And in addition, that was after all absolutely within the terms of the law: Pericles never had any higher power than that of one general among the ten, and that was due simply to his intelligence and rhetorical and other powers. He was always the most esteemed of them, but there was no—I mean, the law and also all of Athens was not in any way affected.

Same Student: This is perhaps exactly why the comparison is interesting.

LS: There is no question that Alcibiades would have no compunction to go to any extreme, and that is quite true. Well, I think it is not possible to clear up the Alcibiades question before we have read the strange insertion coming in the fifth year of this book about the story of the old Athenian tyranny. You know the issue: the Athenians are afraid, you remember, and this fear was based on the traditions about the old tyranny of Peisistratus and his family. And then Thucydides says the old tyranny was not as harsh as the Athenian people believed, you know, and that had some pertinence to the question of Alcibiades. I mean, given the circumstances of Athens, would the tyranny of Alcibiades not have been the only way in which the Sicilian expedition could have been brought to a successful conclusion? That I think is suggested. I believe that Thucydides regarded all tyrannies as exactly parallel—as you know, I think one can bring this out, this point, but we must have a bit more time for that.

Student: One question, whose relevance I hardly see. In Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* it ends with Alcibiades becoming, if not tyrant, at least ruler of Athens.[xx]

Different Student: It is a different Alcibiades.

LS: I don't know, I barely remember it.

First Student: I think he is the grandfather of the Alcibiades in Thucydides, because I think it was staged at the beginning of the fifth century.[xxi]

LS: Well, I think that would settle it. The Greeks themselves make strange use of the community of names; you remember that, for example, in Plato's *Critias* one does not quite know which Critas that is. This character cannot possibly be the tyrant Critias, but

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[xx] The play ends with the exiled Alcibiades marching on the panicked city, stopping on his way to eulogize the recently deceased Timon.

[xxi] The student must mean that Shakespeare's *Timon* was set at the beginning of the fifth century, and therefore that the Alcibiades who is a character in it must be an ancestor of the one known to us. He is mistaken on both counts, however. The only extant classical source for Timon, Plutarch's *Life of Antony,* dates him to the time of the Peloponnesian War, declares him to be attested by the comic playwrights Aristophanes and Plato, and links him with the Alcibiades known to us from Thucydides. (This notwithstanding, the actions that Shakespeare ascribes to Alcibiades in *Timon* are entirely fictitious.)

somehow he is also his grandson, you know, the same name, the same man. We do this only jocularly quite often in the case of a man who behaves very selfishly, and someone will say no wonder, his name is . . . self. It is this kind of thing; we do that all the time. The Greeks did it on a somewhat larger and grander scale.

Student: The comparison of Alcibiades and Pericles brings up a problem which concerned our founding fathers very much, and that is that the continued existence of the rule of superior men of some sort required in a way their obedience to the customs of the community. The excesses of Alcibiades, which grated I suppose against customary morality—

LS: But the question there is not could an individual like Alcibiades possibly lead an orderly and correct life. This question is discussed in Aristophanes's *Frogs*, where one of the poets—either Aeschylus or Euripides, I forget which—gives his advice to the city of Athens. The best thing would be not to bring up a lion cub at all, you know, but once it has grown up the best thing is to let him do his leonine work. And that of course would mean submit to him. I think it is Euripides, but I don't know.[xxii] And that is the question; in other words, I mean, a man like Alcibiades could not be expected to be a normal well-behaving democratic citizen. That was almost as impossible as Lucrezia Borgia,[xxiii] but I do not wish you to elaborate this comparison.

Student: [. . .]

LS: And especially about Anaxagoras. Yes, sure, and there are terrible stories told about the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, you know, and—[xxiv]

Student: And about the temples.

LS: There was also a question about these acts of [. . .] But I think the large majority of the Athenians were sure of Pericles's honesty—well, I suppose they regarded that as much less grave than Pericles's wife.[xxv] You know, this kind of double morality for the two sexes was rather common. But surely Pericles was not such a model of democratic virtue in every respect as, for example, Nicias was, and quite a few others. But still, he kept within limits the horseraces—you know these particularly; he behaved after all like a tyrant who sends his chariots to Olympia. If Hiero of Syracuse[xxvi] did that, that was normal, but a private citizen of Athens? And he says even in public, "I won the first, the

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[xxii] It was indeed Euripides, at *Frogs* 1422-1431b. .

[xxiii] Lucrezia Borgia (1480-1519, daughter of the wicked Pope Alexander VI and, like her brother Cesare Borgia, a notorious profligate and poisoner.

[xxiv] The references to the philosopher Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (ca. 500- ca. 428 BCE) and to stories told about the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War suggest that the student had posed a question about Pericles, who was known to have associated with the former and to whom his enemies attributed responsibility for the latter.

[xxv] The celebrated courtesan Aspasia.

[xxvi] Tyrant of Syracuse, 478-466 BCE. In Xenophon's *Hiero or On the Tyrant*, a fictional dialogue between Hiero and the poet Simonides, the latter recommends that Hiero abandon his practice of entering his teams of horses in the games (*Hiero* 11.5).

second, and the fourth prize"—you admire the truthfulness. He doesn't say the first three prizes, but someone else won the third prize.

Student: Of course another fact in this situation is that relative to the position of being leader and the relationship of the democracy and the relationship to the idea of tyranny—and that was that Peisistratus could overthrow a mountain of protest of the democracy against the tyranny—

LS: That is exactly the point which Thucydides makes. The purpose, however, of this digression is that its relevance for the then-situation—you know, when Alcibiades was there, and that I think—in other words one must not read Thucydides as a scientific historian, as some people call him, who on every occasion displays the exact scientific knowledge he has acquired by his profound studies—he must have some not learned or antiquarian but substantive relevance to subject matter.

Session 13, February 14, 1962
Book 6, chapters 47-105

Leo Strauss: [i]These are really external to your paper.[ii] I am grateful to you for your remark about the seventeenth year, an observation which I had not made but which I could make now in passing about the ridicule and profanation of the mysteries. Nothing is known about that—you know, about what the fact is and what it meant—and there is only one quasi-report which we could find, if we read carefully enough, and that is in Plato's *Banquet*.[iii] I think Plato's *Banquet* is an ironical attempt to tell us what happened; but it is of course nothing of what the populace in Athens spoke about, but that Socrates told the secret told to him by Diotima, and Alcibiades comes in after that. Alcibiades is absolutely innocent of this profanation of the mysteries. That is a very amusing story which is more than amusing.

But now I mention only two points which I think were very good. That Thucydides's account of Peisistratus and the whole story[1] is a vindication of Alcibiades. The points which you made I think are absolutely correct. Of course that is not quite sufficient; we have also to take into consideration that Alcibiades can be vindicated on the basis of other stories which we know. You would admit that, but up to this point you are right. I like particularly your remark about the women in Thucydides. You expressed yourself very succinctly, and could you repeat the gist of your remark on the subject?

Student: I thought about carrying it further—

LS: That is interesting, surely, and quite wise. After all, a thinking man like Thucydides cannot have helped giving some thought to half of the human race.

Same Student: Well, first, it is striking that women are mentioned so little in the history, and when they are mentioned they are usually connected with some sort of piety or religious matter, either as a priestess or—

LS: In other words, only the women who have an official function. That cannot be a political function; it can only be a priestess or prophetess.

Same Student: The four that I thought of are the two mentioned in this story of the fast and the two priestesses. Both of the priestesses have been at least tempted to corruption, or have been corrupt by negligence, and yet the two in the fast had both been expressly innocent of—no, the one girl was apparently innocent and the daughter of Hippias was expressly without *hubris*. I

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[i] The transcriber notes: "The first comments on this tape are inaudible."
[ii] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.
[iii] Strauss chooses to omit Andocides's *On the Mysteries,* a speech delivered in 399 BCE when the author was on trial for his life for his alleged participation in the events. Andocides (ca. 440–ca. 392 BCE) offers a highly detailed account of both the profanation of the Mysteries and the mutilation of the Herms intended to establish his innocence of both. In his speech he indirectly implicates Alcibiades in the mutilation of the Herms (§65); the veracity of this charge is unknowable to us.

wondered if this would indicate that perhaps women in the past were slightly more innocent than women in the present.

LS: [. . .] There is a certain prejudice against the fair sex according to which [. . .] a very wealthy woman is more likely to have troubles than the men. I mean, you find that remark in Plato and in many other worthies, and I don't know that they are right, but this is surely the opinion. It would then be all the more striking that the daughter of a tyrant was particularly nice in this case. And the other is, I think, a decent Athenian girl of the older kind. I could not interpret that so easily, but it would be interesting that the two, if your statistics are correct—

Same Student: Well, there is the priestess who told the Spartans that they will—

LS: Yes, but that was Apollo—

Same Student: It was at the temple of Apollo, but was it Apollo himself?

LS: Apollo says that. That is after Thucydides discloses the fact that this is not strictly speaking Apollo who gives the replies, but the priestess. You have to speak with the priestess. But if your facts are right, it would be interesting that the two only women mentioned who do not have official functions are such ornaments to their sex.[iv] I wouldn't dare to go beyond that before I know a bit more about this whole matter and how this whole thing links up. There is only one passage regarding women which you have not mentioned, and that is in the funeral speech.

Same Student: I said that perhaps we should follow Pericles in refraining from speaking about them—

LS: Oh, I see. After all, it is a scene of war and diplomacy—you know that was not a field of female accomplishment at that time—Mrs. Mesta.[v] But it was very thoughtful of you that you took this up.

Student: Is it at all amazing that there is a paucity of remarks about women in a war history? [. . .]

LS: You are mistaken. Have you never heard of Mata Hari[vi] in the First World War? I don't know if there was any woman of this kind in the Second. I don't remember at the moment, but women appear in the most unexpected quarters, even in war. Well, you have the WACS and

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[iv] Evidently both the student and Strauss have overlooked the egregious counterexamples of Procne (2.29.3) and Brauro (4.107.3), to say nothing of the warlike women of Plataea (2.4.2). On the women of Athens, see Herodotus *History* 5.87-88 and 9.5,

[v] Perle Reid Mesta (1889-1975), American socialite. US Ambassador to Luxembourg (1949-1953), hence Strauss's reference to her diplomacy, but better known as Washington's "Hostess with the Mostest" during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations.

[vi] Mata Hari, stage name of Margaretha Zelle (1876-1917), Dutch exotic dancer and courtesan. Executed by the French as a German spy, she insisted on her innocence; her guilt remains contentious. Her name became proverbial for a *femme fatale.*

WAVES.[vii] I forgot them entirely. The question of the speaker was absolutely pertinent and this must be pursued; we must only—before we link it up with the highest issues, motion and rest, for example—[laughter]. Well, it is not entirely fantastic. If we try that for one moment, if we assume that motion and rest are the highest principles mentioned by Thucydides, how would the two sexes be naturally related? What would you suggest?

Same Student: I think women would tend more to motion—

LS: On the basis of what, may I ask?

Same Student: On the basis of their being more susceptible to emotion.

LS: I see. Ah ha. That is indeed what the sages say. Or as Aristotle puts it and as Saint Thomas Aquinas explains it more explicitly: that children simply don't have practical wisdom; they must be taught it. Women do have it, but they have too strong passions; in other words, while they know what they should do, their passions overcome them, therefore they must be married, and of course to a sensible man.[viii] That is true, but more superficially. Motion has to do with war and with going out from the city—and even in the first place, going out of the house to the market places and other places—and that is surely not sitting at home. That would be the place of women, in Athens at any rate.

Same Student: I don't know whether you'd regard the burning of the temple as motion, but certainly what resulted [from] Harmodius's sister's insult was motion—

LS: But they were the objects—no, I think this would have to be understood regarding the difference between women in official functions, a kind of exception, and women who had no official functions. And one could say, if we really speculate without having made sure of our data—quite sure, because I haven't checked on you—one would say that could be connected with the place of rest. You know, that the two women unqualified, not priestesses and so on, are so nice.

Now there is one point which I would like to mention before we go on. A student has given me a statement about the *hermai* question which is too long to read. And he took this very sensible approach: first let us find out about Hermes, the god Hermes. After all, he is the background of the *hermai* story, and he retells this myth about Hermes. And he concludes this part: Hermes is motion personified. And now the question arises: How come Alcibiades, as far as in him lies, destroys him by destroying his statues? And his general answer is that the human representative of motion, Alcibiades, destroys the divine incarnation of motion, and that has to do with the self-destruction of pure motion. That is the point he makes. Well, it is certainly worth considering, there is no question.

[vii] Women's Auxiliary Corps of the United States Army and Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, the women's branch of the United States Naval Reserve, both during World War Two.
[viii] Aristotle *Politics* 1259b1-10, 1260a9-14*;* St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* 1.92.1 and *Commentary on First Timothy* 2.2 and 2.3.

Now let us turn to the discussion, and very briefly I begin at chapter 47 because we were interrupted last time. Now the Athenians have landed in Sicily, and three strategies are presented, chapter 47, following. The simple-minded soldier Lamachus wants to go straight against the biggest objective, Syracuse herself, the strategy which the British somewhat nastily ascribed to the Americans in the Second World War—you know, just land in France in '42 or '43, it didn't make any difference—and this was Lamachus's point. And Nicias was for extremely careful preparation, whereas Alcibiades was in favor of indeed a diplomatic preparation—winning over allies, thus weakening Syracuse—but then to act. But Lamachus surely takes the side of Alcibiades to persuade Messana, now Messina, to become the base of operations, and then by political means to get allies in Sicily against Selinus and Syracuse. But Messana turns down Alcibiades's request. Then there follows a half-hearted move toward Syracuse, which is a partial adoption of Lamachus's plan, and the Athenians make an alliance with Catana somewhat to the north of Syracuse. It seems that Alcibiades played the foremost role in winning over Catana. In other words, what he did not succeed in in Messana he won there. At this moment he is recalled to Athens, where there is a reign of terror because of the *hermai* and of the mysteries. And behind this reign of terror is the fear of tyranny in the recollection of Peisistratus's tyranny. This gives an occasion to Thucydides to take up the old Athenian tyranny of which he had spoken already, as our speaker has reminded [us], in book 1, chapter 20, and Thucydides repeats that. I don't think we can explain it by the fact that Thucydides wrote the history at various parts of his life, and he thought, say, in 429, that the brief remark in the first book was enough and later on, in 415 and 414, he said: Now I must speak at greater length about that. I think it is wiser to assume that Thucydides wishes to repeat; after all, it is [not] the only case of a repetition. You remember the repeated story of Themistocles and Pausanias in the first book, a very striking example. There is no reason to assume that this was done at different periods of the composition of the book.

Now the rule of Peisistratus and his son Hippias was not harsh, as the Athenian *demos* believes. The tyranny was not hated. As tyrants, they esteemed—i.e., to the extent that tyrants can do it—they esteemed virtue and understanding to the highest degree.[ix] They did not raise high taxes, they adorned the city, they waged the wars with firmness, and brought the sacrifices in a proper manner. The city lived under its old laws: only the magistracies were in the hands of Peisistratus and his adherents. The rule of Peisistratus and his family became harsh only through the murder of Hipparchus, and this murder was caused not by political dissatisfaction but by an erotic affair. There was a point which you made there about the connection between the erotic affair and Sicily. Do you remember that?

Same Student: He spoke about the condition in Athens at the time as being one of fear, and Alcibiades's accusation as being brought about by jealousy of his political opponents. He also speaks of Harmodious and Aristogeiton as being both jealous and then succumbing to fear at the last moment, and thereby ruining their plan. The parallel I drew is that perhaps the *demos* in Athens is similar to these two men, first in their jealousy, and second in their fear, which results in failure because it negates the action.

[ix] The more usual English rendering of Greek *epitēdeusan* would be that these tyrants *practiced* virtue and intelligence in the highest degree.

LS: Now I cannot follow you there; that does not mean that I would not agree with you, because something else strikes me in the first place. Nicias, in his speech against Sicily, says the Athenians are unreasonably enamoured of Sicily—an unfortunate *eros*, and this would be worth considering [. . .] whether the parallelism—in other words, Aristogeiton or Hipparchus to Harmodius [is] equal to the Athenians to Sicily. And surely when there is love there is always the possibility of that, I think. Whether the details would work out the way we think I couldn't tell, but it struck me in reading that that *eros* occurs more than once. It doesn't occur frequently in Thucydides, but I think it occurs more in the discussion of the Sicilian expedition than elsewhere.[x] In the Platonic usage it is not surprising to speak of *eros* in the very widest usage, but in Thucydides it is a bit surprising.

Student: Does it occur when Thucydides speaks of the people being enamoured of Alcibiades?

LS: No, no. That would not agree, I believe, with the fairness of Thucydides. But he speaks only of the Athenians and their relation[2] to Sicily. And I do not even know whether he does it [. . .] own name. I did not consult the index, which is something almost as blameworthy as in reading a detective story looking at the end before the beginning, you know, because you cannot be sure that the index is truly complete. But it is of course one of these [. . .] we have to use.

Here is an important point: Thucydides knows the truth about what happened at that time by a private tradition, as he emphasized at the beginning of chapter 55. It has been suggested that perhaps he belonged to the family of Peisistratus. It is surely not excluded by anything we know.[xi] Now Hippias was the surviving tyrant and was opposed by the Spartans and the Alcmaeonidic family, to which both Pericles and Alcibiades belonged. Hippias went to the Persian king and was present at Marathon on the wrong side—you know, just as Thucydides was also on the wrong side from a strictly Athenian point of view in the second half of the war. Now the point which Thucydides wishes to convey, I believe, is this: the Athenians are mistaken altogether, not only about the facts in this particular case but about tyranny as such. Tyranny is not necessarily harsh. Their fear of tyranny as such is unreasonable. Consider the terror of the democracy at this very moment in Athens. Is the democracy not harsh? And to say nothing of the absurdity of the democratic leader in Syracuse which we have discussed last time. A tyranny of Alcibiades, which the Athenians feared so much, might have been the only means of getting the object of the Athenian eros, namely, Sicily.

In the sequel he describes the increasing savagery of the demos in this affair of the mysteries and the *hermai*. The city must be helped out of its panic by fair means or foul; in other words, someone has to be accused by someone allegedly participating. He would become the witness of the crown—the man who "comes clean," to use this elegant expression—and he is promised immunity and that settles it. But no one knows who did it. There is no genuine cure, in other words, but only a temporary relaxation of the panic. After Alcibiades's flight, Lamachus bows to Nicas; in other words, Nicias then has much greater authority. And they go first to Selinus, very

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[x] Thucydides 6.13.1 (*dyserōtas);* 6.24.3; 6.54.1,2,3, 6.59.1 (these last four of the love affair of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, raised in the context of the affair of the Herms and resultant suspicion of Alcibiades).

[xi] Perhaps not, but this seems highly unlikely, given that the Peisistratids had been driven from Athens on the fall of their tyranny and that Thucydides's patronymic son of Olorus seems to identify him as a member of the Philolaid clan, rivals of the Peisistratids.

much in the west of Sicily, and so they give the Syracusians plenty of time for preparing their defense. Let us read the beginning of chapter 63.

Reader:
The next winter the Athenians fell presently to make preparation for their journey against Syracuse; and the Syracusians, on the other side, prepared to invade the Athenians. For seeing the Athenians had not presently, upon the first fear and expectation of their coming, fallen upon them, they got every day more and more heart. And because they went far from them into those other parts of Sicily, and assaulting Hybla could not take it, they contemned them more than ever, and prayed their commanders, (as is the manner of the multitude when they be in courage), seeing that the Athenians came not unto them, to conduct them to Catana.

LS: In other words, they give the Syracusians time for recovering their courage. In the sequel in chapter 68 there is Nicias's speech to his army, and the main point which he makes is that the enemy is less formidable than the present necessity and absence of a way out.

Student: [. . .] perhaps Lamachus's original strategy was not so bad after all?

LS: Yes, surely, that is true. You see, he is the object of utmost ridicule in Aristophanes's *Acharnians* as the *miles gloriosus*—the boasting soldier—and he surely was a fighter; you know, not a politically wise man. But that might have helped. It is surely not excluded. The fact that Alcibiades surely was not opposed to quick and violent measures and saw it necessary first to gain some allies would seem to show that some diplomatic preparation, because if they had failed in this it would have been worse than never having tried it. Yes, that is true.

Student: Could I make a point before we go further, because we are getting away from it, a point about tyranny? It is just possible perhaps to see in the reflection there that perhaps for Athens the tyranny might have been the best thing and not as bad as they might have thought. To apply that in the Greek sphere as perhaps the reflection that Athens as the tyrant city maybe wasn't as terrible as the rest of the Greeks might have made out.

LS: I think that he made rather clear, didn't he? I mean that he made rather clear also in these prophetic sounding remarks about how the Spartans behaved, would behave after they would have acquired the rule in Greece, that is quite true. We have such simple proofs: Mytilene versus Plataea. While Athens was on the verge of being very brutal against Mytilene, then she saved it, you know. There is no question. But I don't think that one should say—I think what Thucydides says here in the defense of the tyranny is only relative compared with the exaggerated blame of tyranny, the Athenian tyranny in Athens. And also compared with the tyrannical actions of which the Athenian democracy was perfectly capable there is a certain justification. But still, there is a statement in book 8 which does not bear me out on this point, because he wrote there that this was only the best order that the Athenians had in his lifetime, and Peisistratus was of course long before his lifetime.

Same Student: It was interesting, to carry this a bit further again, that there is a kind of parallel between the fact that the Peisistratus tyranny didn't become a really bad tyranny until it had

been, as you might say, knocked off its balance. Similarly, the same might be said about the generation that had grown up in Athens during the war as the result of external pressures.

LS: Yes, but here there was peace—there was peace and the war was started by Athens, you know, the Sicilian expedition—and they were under no compulsion to become so absolutely panicky about this affair. It was truly of their own making. First they give Alcibiades this very great power as fellow commander, and if he had stayed there I'm sure he would have surpassed in glory Nicias. And then, at the same time, to be afraid of him. As Aeschylus, if I remember correctly, in Aristophanes's *Frogs* would have put it: "Either don't bring up the young lion, or if you have brought him up, then you have to submit to him."[xii] I think that redounds only to the Athenian people.

Now in chapter 69, in the second half—perhaps you'll read that.

Reader:
And first, the casters of stones and slingers and archers of either side skirmished in the midst between the armies, mutually chasing each other, as amongst the light-armed was not unlikely. After this, the soothsayers brought forth their sacrifices according to the law of the place—

LS: Now wait a moment. You see this happened in all battles, such sacrifices. But now they are mentioned. Why? Nicias. These are little devices which he uses to bring out the overall situation. In other words, he does not mention every fact which occurred on each occasion, but only when it is significant, then he brings it out. Now go on please.

Reader:
and the trumpets instigated the men of arms to the battle. And they came on to fight, the Syracusians for their country and their lives for the present, and for their liberty in the future; on the other side, the Athenians to win the country of another—

LS: No, no, and the Syracusians fighting for the fatherland and each for his salvation at the moment—I mean to survive at this moment—and for future freedom.

Reader:
and make it their own and not to weaken their own by being vanquished; the Argives and other free confederates, to help the Athenians to conquer the country they came against and to return to their own with victory—

LS: It is not really to return, but to see again their own fatherland after victory.

Reader:
and their subject confederates came also on with great courage, principally for their better safety, as desperate if they overcame not—

LS: Therefore their present, about their present unexpected salvation—because of their situation in a foreign land, almost on a foreign continent, if they would not win.

[xii] Aristophanes *Frogs* 1422-1432a.

Reader:
and withal upon the by, that by helping the Athenians to subdue the country of another, their own subjection might be the easier.[xiii]

LS: Now do you see a difference regarding the motives of the various contingents? I believe only in the case of the Athenians was there a complete absence of private motives. In all other cases—to see one's fatherland is of course for the individual, you know. I mean, the army can defeat the enemy, you won't see your fatherland again, but others will. And the Athenians seem to be the only ones who do not think of themselves. That is of course an important confirmation of the funeral speech, the great dedication.[xiv] And let us read the immediate sequel at the beginning of chapter 70.

Reader:
After they were come to hand-strokes, they fought long on both sides. But in the meantime there happened some claps of thunder and flashes of lightning together with a great shower of rain; insomuch as it added to the fear of the Syracusians, that were now fighting their first battle and not familiar with the wars; whereas to the other side that had more experience the season of the year seemed to expound that accident; and their greatest fear proceeded from the so long resistance of their enemies,

LS: Well, what does this say? The experience of war takes away a certain kind of superstition—that these are only natural, the lightnings and the rain and so on. I think this must be considered for a full understanding of the remark in book 3, chapter 82 that the war is a violent teacher. It is not merely a teacher in violence: it is a teacher by means of violence of such things as this. Well, we cannot go into all these things. In the sequel it appears that the Athenians win a victory, but they do not exploit it. The question arises: Is this due to Nicias's caution? It is not said. Nicias forgot the cavalry; that is surely a crucial reason why they could not exploit it. Why, why did he forget the cavalry? He had mentioned it in Athens, if I remember, book 6, chapter 23. But he forgot it. Why, why did he not insist on a few hundred horsemen, and say "otherwise I will not move"? I think because he thought he could avoid the war with the Syracusians and make it only a show of power, as he planned. In other words, his hope.

In the next chapter, 72, we find that eulogy of Hermocrates to which the paper referred. Let us read that, from the second sentence in chapter 72.

Reader:
and Hermocrates, the son of Hermon—

LS: Is it not interesting that the god Hermes appears not only in his name but his father's name?

Reader:

[xiii] Thucydides 6.69.
[xiv] At the same time Thucydides has made it clear that the Athenians' devotion to the common good of which the Sicilian expedition is the expression is in no way disinterested (6.24).

a man not otherwise second to any in wisdom, and in war both able for his experience and eminent for his valour, standing forth gave them encouragement and would not suffer them to be dismayed with that which had happened.

LS: Now you will remember that Hermocrates was the man who pointed out, and he points out in the sequel—yes, this I think we should read because it has very much to do with Thucydides's own views. Not that Hermocrates speaks for Thucydides, but Thucydides's opinions shine through what Hermocrates says. After all, he has first spoken of his intelligence—that is at least as good, a better translation than what Hobbes calls wisdom; that means the quality which Themistocles had, for example, and Pericles. Let us read the sequel.

Reader:
Their courage, he said, was not overcome, though their want of order had done them hurt. And yet in that they were not so far inferior as it was likely that they would have been, especially being (as one may say) homebred artificers, against the most experienced in the war of all the Grecians.

LS: Laymen—you know, they are still not spiritual, and the Athenians have the perfect skill of the art of war.

Reader:
That they had also been hurt by the number of their generals and commanders—for there were fifteen that commanded in chief—

LS: Thucydides says, more precisely: "The multitude of the commanders and the [*polyarchian*]—ruling of many,"[xv] which reminds one of the blame of Odysseus, you know, at the beginning of the *Iliad*: *ouk agathon polykoiranië.*[xvi] The Homeric expression is only the old form for what Thucydides calls *polyarchia.* Here he says, "Not good is the ruling of many." One should be ruler; one should be king. In other words, this is here Hermocrates's criticism not of democracy itself, surely, but of the Syracusian democracy.

Reader:
and by the many supernumerary—

LS: Fifteen generals at the same battle. It is indeed [*anarchian*].[3]

Reader:
soldiers under no command at all.

LS: You see, no discipline in the ranks, and so many commanders. It is a strictly democratic army.

Reader:
Whereas if they would but a few and skilful leaders—

[xv] That is, "ruling *by* many."
[xvi] Homer *Iliad* 2.204,

LS: The few is of course [*oligoi*], that is the word which is in oligarchy. The army must be oligarchic and not democratic.

Reader:
and prepare armour this winter for such as want it, to increase as much as might be the number of their men of arms, and compel them in other things to the exercise of discipline, in all reason they were to have the better of the enemy. For valour they had already, and to keep their order would be learned by practice; and both of these would still grow greater; skill, by practicing with danger; and their courage would grow bolder of itself, upon the confidence of skill. And for their generals, they ought to choose them few and absolute—[xvii]

LS: In the modern democracy—that is, at least in the powerful ones, understood—an army cannot be democratic. But there were experiments made with democratic armies, you know, with the full democratization of the army—not in this country as far as I know, but surely in other countries, and they lead naturally to failure.

We find in chapter 74 a failure of the Athenians which was due to the flight of Alcibiades. There are other examples of that, we don't have to go into that. We come now to Hermocrates's speech in Camarina. I give a brief summary of his speech: "The Athenians have come to Sicily, not for helping any Sicilians, but for subjugating the whole of Sicily. The Athenians did not liberate the Greeks from the Persians, as the popular story goes; they merely replaced the Mede by a harsher rule of their own. It is our own fault if we are conquered through our disunity, for the character of Athenian policy is obvious. We are different; we can also easily be conquered. We are Dorians, not Ionians." But of course only part of the island of Sicily is Dorian. This he doesn't say. "I do not believe that the Athenians war only against Syracusians, but also against you. You envy and fear Syracuse, and believe that you are safer if the Athenians defeat us. This is absurd. You have to take that risk that we should grow still stronger through Athens' defeat, for it is certain that the defeat of Syracuse will mean the enslavement of Camarina too." You see the point: "If the Athenians win, you will be enslaved; if we win, you will be enslaved by us." But what is the wise thing to do in such a situation? Well, perhaps to cross the bridge when you come to it. In other words, consider the immediate danger. Hermocrates surely does not mean clearly the danger threatening Camarina from Syracuse if the Athenians are defeated. Even if the Camarinians were the allies of the Syracusians, that is no guarantee.

He then turns to the argument from justice, chapter 79: "The alliance with Athens is not valid in this case. First, in terms of the treaty, you are not obliged to go to war against us if the Athenians are the aggressors; and, secondly, it is just that those who are by nature kindred fight together [against] those who are by nature enemies." And that means natural kindred, the Dorians, and natural enemies, the non-Dorians, the Ionians. Do you remember this argument by nature as a principle of international law, as one would say today, from another ancient writer who is surely known to many of you, or to all of you?

Student: [. . .]

[xvii] Thucydides 6.72.

LS: Yes, the fifth book of the *Republic*. Since he traces the argument from justice to cowardice, we must show that the war against Athens is not terrible. In other words, there is no reason for being cowardly. Neutrality is no way out for you, for you will be in the hands of the Athenians if they win, and you will be punished by us for your neutrality if we win.

There follows the speech of the Athenian Euphemus, chapter 82 following: "We Athenians acted justly, as can be shown on the basis of what Hermocrates said." You see, they are always the most rhetorically effective—if you can turn the table on your opponent. Hermocrates said the Ionians are always the enemies of the Dorians and vice versa. That fits us exactly, because fear of the Dorians is the cause of all our actions. We acquired our empire in order not to be[4] subservient to the Dorian Peloponnesus. And in subjugating the islanders, we did not subjugate Dorians but Ionians, indeed, but rightly, for these islanders came as allies of the Persians." In other words, the Dorian–Ionian antagonism is not the only politically relevant fact. "We fight for our own salvation here in Sicily, which is also the salvation of Camarina." Or, in other words, "We hold our empire over them out of fear, and we are here in Sicily from fear, not in order to subjugate others, but in order to prevent our own subjugation. The fact that we have reason to fear we shall establish on the basis of Hermocrates's speech. For if you resist Syracuse, it cannot send forces to the Spartans. Hermocrates tried to present us as hypocrites,[5] saying that we act differently to the Chalcidians in Sicily and to the Chalcidians in Euboea, the island near Athens; namely, here the Athenians come in order to help the Chalcideans, and there in Euboea they have oppressed them. He said, if you are so eager to liberate Chalcidians you have some at your doorstep. But that we act differently toward the Chalcidians here and the Chalcidians in Greece is perfectly consistent and not self-contradictory, as Hermocrates said, for we are an imperial city, and for such a city, just as for a tyrannical individual, only security counts. It is to our interest here that cities like Camarina be free and not subject to us. We will take no interest in subjugating them, for we fear the Syracusians, who strive for empire over Sicily. You yourselves share this fear of Syracuse, as you showed by your alliance with us. Now while we are here with a great army there is a time, the only time, for you to free yourself from this danger for good. That will never happen again, that such a large Athenian army for your salvation will be available. We have told you the whole truth and we are going to summarize it." And then he speaks also at the end of the salutary character of the compulsion which Athens exercises.

Now this speech, I think, is very easy to understand and very interesting. This man Euphemus, nothing is known of him—at least, in 1905 there was nothing known of him; that is the commentary which I looked up. It is easily accessible but I think I have never heard of it. And I again believe that nothing will ever be found out about him. "Euphemus," you know, from English usage: "euphemistically." The euphemistic man, the man who speaks euphemistically; the opposite from blasphemy: euphemy. He surely deserves his name. He does not say that Athens is a tyrant city; he says only that it is in the same position as a tyrant, which is not quite the same. But the key point, compared with the speech of the Athenians in Sparta: it is the direct opposite of the Athenian speech in Sparta. What did the Athenians say there in the first speech? What were their motives?

Student: Fear was one of the big things that they alleged in Sparta.

LS: One of the things?

Student: Profit and necessity.

LS: And honor. But what does Euphemus say? Only fear. He drops completely honor and profit. In other words, he withdraws to that motive which alone is, practically speaking, defensible under all circumstances. That is the great change. Naturally—what is the euphemism? The Athenians are no longer sitting on a high horse. And also the contrast with the Melian dialogue would also be very helpful. The Athenians, he says, are concerned only with their salvation. I don't know a better translation of the Greek word. What would you say if you are in distress? With being safe. The Athenians are only concerned with being safe. And he really says the whole truth. There is already a sense of great danger in this Athenian army in Sicily. They are now truly concerned with being safe. In other words, he let the cat out of the bag. The implication of this, as well as the remark in the first book in the speech of the Athenians, is that the universally defensible thing is self-preservation, mere being safe from destruction, and not the others. Profit, wealth: you can live without there being more; honor: you can live without being looked up to. Self-preservation is the most respectable thing. As a result, it must have made a deep impression on who do you think? Hobbes. Sure, and Hobbes knew it surely first hand, having taken the great trouble of translating it. But Hobbes, of course—what did Hobbes add to Thucydides? I mean, how did he modify?

Student: [. . .]

LS: Exactly, but I don't think anyone could hear you.

Same Student: He turned the self-preservation of the *polis* into the self-preservation of human nature.

LS: Sure. And that is of course an entirely different question, whether the plea of self-preservation is as universally valid for the individual as it is for the *polis*. Think of the conclusion to which Hobbes was forced: that someone who is about to be led to the death chamber has the right by nature of killing the guards and burning down the whole prison just for dear life. Or also, there can never be a moral obligation to go to war, because you endanger your self-preservation. That is, I think, clear. So in this Thucydides is much more political than Hobbes, because he takes the *polis* as the starting point for understanding, whereas Hobbes starts from the prepolitical individual.

Student: Are you neglecting for some other reason chapter 85, where Euphemus says, "nontheless, we are thinking about our own profit [. . .]"?

LS: Who says this? Euphemus?

Same Student: Euphemus says this in the first sentence of 85: "Now to a tyrant or city that reigneth, nothing can be thought absurd if profitable, nor any man a friend that—"

LS: That is not . . . which means useful [. . .] But that I think does not necessarily mean more than what is conducive to its preservation. It was clearly distinguished. So this speech of

Euphemus is, I think, the best commentary on the situation of the Athenians after Alcibiades's recall. You know, the possibility of destruction becomes somehow felt within the Athenian army. Now what is the debate of the Camarinaeans? What do they do? Let us read that in chapter 88.

Student: Before we get too far away, there is one thing that impressed me in Hermocrates's speech. When you analyze it [. . .] I think that one of the things he is saying here [. . .] that when the chips are down and we are on the side of right, then there is no such thing as neutrality. And this, I think, has some bearing on the present situation.

LS: [By] "present," you mean 1962.

Same Student: I think it is interesting that you cannot be neutral in a case like this. It is not just, "If we want to we will enslave you." It is more subtle than that. You cannot be neutral. There is no such thing as neutral.

LS: That is true, but the question is, of course, if you tried to force a neutral to turn to your side, this use of force might induce him to go over to the other side. Now if the neutral in question is powerful to some extent, then you might hang yourself, you know. That is the difficulty. But here it was fairly simple because the Syracusians were fighting for—there was already a war; the war was no longer cold, if you know what I mean, and therefore the hot war permits courses of action which are imprudent as long as the war is not yet hot. And that one has to consider. I do not wish to make any policy recommendations or anything like this.

Same Student: One more thing. It is interesting that the Syracusians send no less a man than Hermocrates, while the Athenians send Euphemus.

LS: That is also remarkable, you are right. But they should have sent Nicias, I think. But Nicias—after all, our last experience with him, his speech in Athens, he would not be good. Nicias was wise to send the Euphemist.

Student: There is something else in Euphemus's speech in chapter 86. He repeats the argument made earlier by Nicias that even if they do conquer Sicily, they cannot hold it. Do you think that this is another euphemism, or is it a recognition that they cannot hold Sicily?

LS: That is hard to say, but it could very well be that the conceits of an intelligent Athenian had changed a bit with the increasing awareness of the fact that the conquest of Sicily would not be a walkover. You know? That could be. In other words, it is hard to say whether this is an argument used—I mean, the fact that he says "I have told you the whole truth" does not prove necessarily that he did tell the whole truth as he saw it. Would you admit that? It can be a very good rhetorical device precisely for someone who does not say the whole truth.

Student: Does that argument there not also sort of take up the argument which Hermocrates uses which can be turned straight on its back, which is the one that he says to the Camarinaeans, that if you side with the Athenians and you win—and the Athenians win—you will fall under Athens, and if we win we'll take our revenge on you? The same is exactly true if they side with the Syracusians and the Athenians win, the Athenians will be able to take their revenge. This remark

of Euphemus in a way acts on that because it shows that the Athenians are not in as good a position for taking revenge on the Camarinaeans in the long run as the Syracusians who are right next door.

LS: I think that one can say generally—that was shown by two French scholars, Madame de Romilly, who is still living (and I suppose quite young, so I shouldn't say still living), and a teacher whose name I am not sure [of], that all the speeches of Thucydides which are contradictory are built up in such a way that each argument of the first speaker is taken up somehow by the second speaker. You know, there is an amazing logicity in this, and what one should do is in each case to have a complete list of all arguments of Hermocrates, and then see how Euphemus replied. And of course another point, naturally: Is there an argument to which he doesn't reply at all? And that would immediately reveal the weak side of the second speaker.

Now let us see the decision of the Camarinaeans in chapter 88.

Reader:
Thus spake Euphemus. The Camarinaeans stood thus affected: they bare good will to the Athenians, save that they thought they meant to subjugate Sicily; and were ever at strife with the Syracusians about their borders. Yet because they were afraid that the Syracusians, that were near them, might as well get the victory as the other, they had both formerly sent them some few horse, and also now resolved for the future to help the Syracusians, but underhand and as sparingly as possible; and withal that they might no less seem to favour the Athenians than the Syracusians, especially after they had won a battle, to give for the present an equal answer unto both.

LS: It doesn't quite bring out the contradiction, I mean, the antithesis statement in Thucydides. By deed to help the Syracusians for the time being, but by speech to give the same answer to both.

Reader:
So after deliberation had, they answered thus: that forasmuch as they that warred were both of them their confederates, they thought it most agreeable to their oath for the present to give aid to neither.

LS: Is this not beautiful? This was the true decision, the first, and the other was a well-sounding justification. But in the second case, it is particularly charming that although they speak of their oath they decide even in their open speech to abide by their oath only for the time being. They are perfectly willing to break their oath if the proper opportunity arises. We learn next in the same chapter that in the Corinthians' opinion this would not surprise anyone. There is already a war between Sparta and Athens going on—only, as they say, not quite open, not quite conspicuous. That was the Thucydidean equivalent to what we call cold war.[xviii] They call it an unperspicuous war—I mean, it is not fully manifest. And then we come finally to Alcibiades in action in Sparta, which according to Thucydides is decisive. In other words, the Athenians would have conquered Syracuse and eventually Sicily if Alcibiades had not swung Spartan opinion in favor of intervention in Sicily.

[xviii] It is unclear what in chapter 88 Strauss's remarks about the Corinthians refer to.

And then we come to the speech of Alcibiades in chapter 89 following. It begins exactly—the first word in the original is exactly like the first word in the Corinthian speech in Athens in the first book: necessary. It does not begin with the word justice; it doesn't go so far, although he will say a lot about justice. In fact, he turns almost immediately to the question of justice because he has to justify the justice of his anti-Spartan activity in earlier times. Well, the justification is very simple: the Spartans hurt him first. They did not pay him the due respect that flattered Nicias. He also justifies himself and his family [member] Pericles, because of its seemingly democratic policy: "Our family, we are merely against the tyrants, the Athenian tyrants"—you know, his family was the great Alcmaeonidic family—"was instrumental in disposing of tyrants, together with the Spartans, so we really feel the same way. We are democratic only in the same way everyone who is opposed to tyranny is democratic, i.e., we are democratic only in the same way in which Sparta is democratic. The democrats proper have expelled me from Athens. This proves how little democratic I am. Democracy is, of course—we are speaking among people who know—admitted madness. But for good reasons we could not abolish it." I mean, *we* can also mean Pericles.

In chapter 89 towards the end, the last three sentences or so, when he says they have driven me out.

Reader:
But as for us, when we had the charge of the whole, we thought it reason, by what form it was grown most great and most free and in which we received it, in the same to preserve it. For though such of us as have judgment do know well enough what the democracy is, and I no less than another (insomuch as I could inveigh against it; but of confessed madness nothing can be said that is new), yet we thought it not safe to change it when you our enemies were so near us.

LS: Yes, this is the point. By the way, he speaks always here of "we"—you know, "we" meaning the family. In brief: "In my heart I was always a good pro-Spartan, and a good anti-democrat, so you cannot hold anything against me. I will know best—I am going to tell you of our plans." How is this fellow called, the second after Khrushchev, who was here, who is chiefly interested in economic matters?

Student: Mikoyan.

LS: Mikoyan, I mean him. Mikoyan would suddenly arrive in Washington and over the radio tell the secret plans of the Soviet Union, the last decisions of the most secret councils.[xix] What a terrific thing. Now what he warned is this: While the conquest of Sicily, southern Italy, and Carthage—we want then to return to the conquest of the great mainland. The conclusion is clear: If you do not help the Syracusians, the Athenians are bound to succeed in Sicily, and this will

[xix] Anastas I. Mikoyan (1895-1978). Armenian Communist, unique in serving as a high-level Soviet functionary continuously from the epoch of Lenin all the way to retirement under Brezhnev. He was particularly close to Nikita Khrushchev, for whom he undertook numerous foreign missions, including several to the U.S. There he met with groups both public and private, and made many media appearances. (Whatever his claims of frankness, he did not disclose any state secrets.) Strauss presumably refers to his visit of 1962, during which he was photographed in the Oval Office with President Kennedy.

have all the consequences mentioned before. And you must help quickly, not in the Spartan manner. Send a strong army under Spartan commanders to Sicily and attack Athens herself. Fortify Decelea. This is what the Athenians are most afraid of, and the right strategy is to attack the enemy a that point which he fears most, because he should know best what his weaknesses are. Therefore it is the first thing to find out what the enemy fears most, and I who know best tell you what the Athenians fear most.

Now the disclosure of the Athenian plan and the advice based on that disclosure regarding the war against the Athenians form the center of Alcibiades's speech. The beginning and the end deal with Alcibiades himself. In the beginning Alcibiades had established his trustworthiness by proving that he was always pro-Spartan and antidemocratic, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, but after his enormous action of treason, he must reestablish his character, and this he does in the final part of his speech. He must show that he is not a crooked criminal, that he is not unjust, and that furthermore his status as an exile does not impair his usefulness to the Spartans. You know there is the famous story—Machiavelli has written a whole chapter on it in the *Discourses*, toward the end of the second book—how dangerous exiles are as advisors, because they want to get home again, and therefore they underestimate the difficulties of such return, you know, and are poor advisors.[xx]

And now the justification. It is very simple: "I am not a traitor. I have been wronged by Athens. I have lost my *polis*; I have no *polis*. Hence no one can accuse me of being not a [*philopolis*], not a lover of the *polis*, not a patriot. I have no fatherland. Not through my fault they took it away from me. On the contrary, my turning point against Athens and trying to bring about her ruin is an attempt to regain my fatherland. You see I am a true lover of my fatherland; I want to have it back." Well, this is what Alcibiades has to say. And the Spartans decide to act on Alcibiades's advice, and that settles the outcome of the Sicilian war. It is quite a speech. But one doesn't know—should one be more impressed by the amazing boldness or more repelled by the amazing lack of shame? But surely, if the test is success, short-range success, it is a terrific success. I mean, from becoming the leader of Athens, he becomes in fact the leader of Sparta, the whole Spartan combination. It is fantastic. We will see other enormous feats which he achieves in the eighth book. Well, he is an amazing man.

Student: I am not sure of this plan which is outlined, how much of it is Alcibiades's and how much of it is Athens' plan. He seems to see more in the future for Athens than Athens outside of him has ever seen before.

LS: I do not remember now all the passages, but there were some remarks about the quick, very quick Athenian conquest in the west. But I don't know whether they were mentioned with this clarity before Alcibiades appeared. In other words, whether these were not seeds sown by Alcibiades himself.[xxi] But even apart from that, these plans would have been mere pie-in-the-sky, except for Alcibiades. And in his mind these were genuine plans, not merely wishes, and I think he would have conquered Sicily because the Spartans surely would have been very slow, in spite

[xx] Machiavelli *Discourses* 2.31.

[xxi] In fact, Thucydides has presented the seemingly insane scheme of an Athenian conquest of the mighty empire of Carthage as a plan of Alcibiades which however he does not disclose to the Athenians.

of all the pressure exerted by Corinth. And at the end of the sixth book, as we have seen, Syracuse is approaching despair, defeatism, and an energetic siege and no help in sight might have led to the conquest of Syracuse in a very short time, and then there was no power to speak of which would resist it.

Same Student: He says these are our plans. Actually what he means is these are my plans—

LS: That is perfectly true. Without him, these plans would have been very defective.

Same Student: Did you intend to take up the beginning of chapter 93?

LS: I did not, but if you see—

Same Student: It strikes me as interesting that—you say that the Spartans sort of planned this before. They wanted to send an army to both Athens and to Sicily, but they neglected it, they delayed.

LS: They were always slow, but—

Same Student: What is interesting is that somehow they knew about his advice; they had almost given themselves the same kind of advice, but the difference was their slowness. And the interesting thing is that his character somehow prompted them to act on this plan.

LS: You know, there is a great difference between vague apprehensions, "they might do that," and the certainty—an enormous difference. At any rate, at the beginning of chapter 93, Thucydides said, "Alcibiades said so much." He does not say, as he usually does, "such like this." "Such *like* this." Now this expression, "this much," occurs generally after brief speeches—I mean, the addresses of the generals to their armies are the most common case. But here we have a political speech of reasonable length in which he says this much, and that has to be properly understood. So many amazing things. This schematic formula has many meanings, for example, when Brasidas makes his speech and said "so much," we must think for a Spartan, for a laconic Spartan it is a long speech. And this has to be considered in each case in the context.

Same Student: I thought that it was interesting that [he] mentioned nothing to the pious Spartans of the reason why he had to leave Athens.

LS: Who would?

Same Student: I mean, he makes no attempt to prove his innocence.

LS: Let me see now. You have a point. I would state it differently. He does not say a word about why he was expelled. He does not say, "because I am in my heart pro-Spartan and antidemocratic I was expelled." He does not say that; he does [not] expand it at all. That is true and that is very important. So many things, one could then say, and so little, in a way, about the most crucial point.

Same Student: I was just thinking that as Brasidas was sort of an Athenian in the Spartan camp in the first half who wins the first stage of the war, and Alcibiades is an Athenian who wins the second stage of the war.

LS: Yes, but of course Brasidas was a very simple man; very gifted, but clearly tied to his function. And the motive which he had, in which he probably believed, to liberate the Greeks, is also straightforward and shining. And Alcibiades is a sinister man, but a grand sinister man.

Same Student: Indeed, but it seems to take an Athenian sort of character to give daring and motion to the Spartans.

LS: Oh, that is what you want to say. Yes, that is good.

Same Student: They need vitamins, you might say, before [. . .]

LS: That is too medical.

Student: Is there not something in [chapter] 92 in Alcibiades's speaking about how he is a lover of the *polis*? In book 3 of the *Politics*, Aristotle mentions about the good man and the good citizen: a good man is not necessarily a good citizen.

LS: Very good. In other words, if there had been the proper occasion in this speech to go into these deep waters he could have used this distinction. A good man cannot be a good citizen in a bad polity. But one could of course say, "Why were you so active in that bad polity in such a conspicuous way for such a long time?" That they can do first.

Same Student: When he uses the phrase, there is [*metriōteroi*], more moderate—somewhere he says that people like us who don't want a democracy, we try to be a bit more moderate. Hasn't this to be taken with a grain of salt?

LS: Yes, yes. By the way, why was it not a defect rhetorically in Alcibiades's speech to be silent about the reason for his expulsion?

Same Student: In the first place, there was scarcely anything he could say because even the mere suspicion would [. . .] to put him in a bad light in Sparta.

LS: That is true. But on the other hand, you have to face strong suspicions, you know, to disarm them. But why was it not necessary here? After all, you must think of the situation.

Same Student: They were probably so anxious to have him.

LS: So in other words, the story of the gift horse into whose mouth you don't look. No, no, these proverbs are much wiser than many scientific explanations in terms of dysfunctional—to use a term which I heard recently. Here there is another thing which I should at least mention at the beginning of chapter 94. Read the first sentence or so.

Reader:
In the very beginning of the next spring the Athenians in Sicily departed from Catana and sailed by the coast to Megara of Sicily. The inhabitants whereof, in the time of the tyrant Gelon, the Syracusians (as I mentioned before) had driven out and now possess the territory themselves.

LS: What I had in mind is the very casual remark, "as I mentioned before," "as I have said before." If this expression occurs—as I read in somewhere, and I have no evidence to the contrary—only here and at the beginning of book 5, remember, where he says, "As I have said before"—I must be cautious because I do not know that, I can only say that I do not know anything to the contrary. Now in the first case, at the beginning of book 5 it is perfectly clear; the reference there is to the earlier account of what the Athenians did on the island of Delos, where they purified the island. And this was the story, you remember, where Homer was mentioned, a passage of which I made much. It was a correction of the picture given in the Archaeology. In other words, the past was not as low and mindless as it was presented in the Archaeology. Here you have also a reference to—here the reference is to book 6, chapter 4, i.e., the story of the Sicilian original situation, a repetition of the Archaeology. I mean, if these data are sufficient, you could say that Thucydides refers here explicitly, and only in these two cases, [to] passages, to repetitions regarding the Archaeology, which is the basic part of the whole work. Perhaps you remember what I said when we discussed this Homeric story—you know, it became clear to me on the basis of Diodotus's speech against Cleon—the revision of the simple condemnation of the past, the rejection of the simple progressive scheme, in other words. If we have some time we can take it up later, but I will here mention only a few more points which are indispensable.

Now then, the Spartan war with Argos. The Spartans are again handicapped by their piety. You see how important it is that Alcibiades enters: he has no troubles, scruples, as the Spartans do. Now the Athenians surround Syracuse with a wall and no help comes to Syracuse from Sparta. The Syracusians lose hope, and talk about peace begins with Nicias after Lamachus had been killed in battle, and Nicias was the sole commander.

Student: They don't build a wall all the way around [. . .]

LS: I had the impression that they did—I mean, the Syracusians tried to disturb them, had some momentary success, but then they had to withdraw. But I may be mistaken.

Same Student: I understand that they start building out themselves; that is, the Syracusians built out a counter-wall and they fight over that, and they build up a second counter-wall, and by the time they had built the third counter-wall, in book 8, help arrives from Corinth and Sparta and they never complete the wall to the north—

LS: Well, then you may be perfectly right, and I probably didn't read it with the necessary attention. The situation is so grave in Syracuse that Hermocrates, the savior of Syracuse, is replaced by other generals. But the Spartan expeditionary force is already on its way. Nicias does not take the threat seriously: hope, hope. That is in chapter 104, and now let us read the beginning of chapter 105.

Reader:

About the same time of this summer, the Lacedaemonians invaded the territory of Argos, they and their confederates, and wasted a great part of their land. And the Athenians aided the Argives with thirty galleys; which most apparently broke the peace between them—

LS: Most visibly, most manifestly.

Reader:
and the Lacedaemonians. For before, they went out from Pylus with the Argives and Mantineans but in the nature of freebooters—

LS: In other words, how could this be called today? Volunteers. It is not an official act. The fundamental distinctions are still there, only under different names.

Reader:
and that also not into Laconia, but other parts of Peloponnesus. Nay, when the Argives have often entreated them but only to land with their arms in Laconia, and having wasted never so little of their territory in return, they would not.

LS: That was a clear stipulation of the treaty, as you could see in book 5, chapter 18.

Reader:
But now, under the conduct of Pythodorus, Laespodius, and Demaratus, they landed in the territory of Epidaurus Limera and in Prasiae, and there and in other places wasted the country, and gave unto the Lacedaemonians a most justifiable cause to fight against the Athenians.[xxii]

LS: The most well-presentable cause. In other words, Thucydides here indicates also that perhaps this was not necessary. But for the weaker bretheren among the Spartans, it was very good to have a clear legal cause which was supplied here. At any rate, in the second part of the war, as we shall see later, the Spartans have a good conscience and are sure that they have a certainty of victory that they did not have in the first part.

Student: I don't see why they can be quite so clear in their conscience when this action takes place already after the decision is made both to send aid to Syracuse and to invade Attica.

LS: Well, the human mind is a very complicated thing. I mean, under the influence of persuasive gifts of Alcibiades, you know, the temptation was too great to resist. They accepted it, but there were surely people, honestly pious men, in Sparta, there is no question, who still said, "We are not so sure. It is of course a wonderful opportunity, but is it right? Is it right?" Then they get . . . then temptation plus right.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, yes.

[xxii] Thucydides 6.105.

Same Student: He did another rather interesting thing there. I'm thinking about why Nicias [. . .] its piracy. Perhaps Nicias couldn't believe that the Spartans would actually resort to open war [. . .] because Nicias wouldn't do a thing like this to violate a truce, presumably.

LS: That is also very good. That is even very thoughtful because of—especially the irony. Nicias is, in a way, a Spartan. I mean, he has an old-fashioned posture altogether, and he would be swayed by motives similar to those by which the old-fashioned Spartans would be swayed. But the super-crook Alcibiades succeeds in presenting himself to the Spartans as the only true Spartan in Athens. That is, I think, still grander, and shows his sinister genius at work. An amazing man. I have a feeling that I led to some incomprehension when I referred to this Delos–Homer business, which I believe is absolutely crucial for the inner movement of the whole book. That doesn't seem to have sunk in when I tried to state it. Or is my interpretation of facial expression completely wrong?

Student: Well, from what I have in my notes, it seems as though the remarks "as I have said before" refers to the Archaeology, and that is the only time—

LS: Not literally to the Archaeology, but to the Sicilian Archaeology, i.e., to the corrected Archaeology, just as the other reference of this kind refers to Delos, which is in fact also a correction of the Archaeology. I mean, that was not difficult, but the old story about Delos and Homer, that is what you do not remember. Well, if the Archaeology, the schema which Thucydides uses, is that of a progress from weakness to strength—I mean, [from] simple weakness in military and other [power] to military power and of course from poverty to wealth, that goes without saying. But if[6] the progress from weakness to strength is accompanied by a progress from the weakness of the mind to strength of the mind, the ancients were wrong; for example, what Homer tells you about the Trojan War, that is just fairy tales for little children; that they fought for Helen, that was serious business. By the way,[7] one would also have to consider for the women—I mean, the exclusion. You know, a man can speak of a subject without mentioning—and what he does with the Trojan War is of course disposing of the importance of women. You know, according to Homer they fought for a woman; according to Thucydides, they fought for real estate or, you know, serious business.

So to come back: a progress from weakness, including weakness of mind, to strength, including strength of the mind—a simple scheme of progress. And this was, as far as I have seen, nowhere questioned. Needless to say, Thucydides did not believe that every Athenian in his time was a genius; only Pericles almost went so far, but not Thucydides. But you know, you understand. But the first rumor, distant rumor to the contrary appeared in the speech of Diodotus, that is, the speech in the third book against Cleon regarding Mytilene, where Diodotus gives a kind of survey of the history of capital punishment and says, "Well, capital punishment was nonexistent at the beginning and progressed tremendously throughout the ages." In other words, a wholly unreasonable punitiveness which is clearly not a progress. And this had to do with another major point which Diodotus made, namely, about the folly of the *demos*. Now, how these were connected with each other did not become clear to me until we came to the story of Delos, where we found this long, unnecessarily long, quotation from Homer, thirteen verses, and it was to me a message. Now what did he say in this story? That in Delos [8]in Homeric times there were gymnastic and music contests. Homer himself participated. Then this whole thing decayed, and

the Athenians only in this year—I forgot now what it was, it must have been 421-422 or so—restored the Delian festivals to their ancient splendor. But not quite. They restored everything else, not the music contest. Instead, they introduced horse racing, which was not a part—horse racing, that has ominous implications, do you remember? Alcibiades. And so you see, if you read this picture you have here a high level in Delos, then a decay. The Athenians restore, but don't reach the original height.

Now these are the very slender or subtle indications of the questioning of the progressive schema of the beginning. That it is however important, however subtle or invisible it may be, is shown by a broader consideration: because the incarnation of progress is Athens, and the incarnation of the opposite of progress, the old-fashionedness, is Sparta. Therefore these subtle implications are not the only sign of a Thucydidean doubt of the simple progressive scheme, because we have seen that Thucydides cannot simply be said to be on the side of Athens—on the side of Athenian principles, I would say. Now the Athenian progress, however, the progressiveness of Athens stands and falls by the principle of *technē*, or art—I mean, in the Greek sense, not the fine arts—and the Spartans were underdeveloped in this respect. So the criticism of the progressive scheme of the Archaeology must be linked up with the doubt of the ultimately decisive importance of *technē*. Now once we have reached this point we are on familiar ground, we who have done our homework in Aristotle, because in one of the most important sections of Aristotle—Miss Hill, do you know where that is?

Miss Hill: Isn't it where Aristotle doubts that technology is for the benefit of mankind, it can be to destroy—

LS: Can you mention a name, so that we can make sure that we are talking exactly about the same subject?

Miss Hill: Hippodamus.

LS: Hippodamus, a name which should be known to every political scientist, because he is the founder of our discipline—modifications there must be, you remember what Aristotle said about him. But the importance of this section about Hippodamus in the second book is this: that Aristotle makes here the assertion that there is a fundamental difference between the arts—which include also the sciences—and what we call social institutions and what Aristotle called laws. Progress is no question as far as the sciences are concerned; I mean, it is of their nature to progress, provided that people apply themselves properly or that the other conditions are fulfilled. But in the case of laws, stability is a much more important consideration than progress or change of any kind.[xxiii] And this is a point, I think, of which Thucydides was as aware as Aristotle, it only comes out in a different way.

Student: [. . .]

LS: That is not a contradiction. Oh, I see, insofar as the war is destructive. That is a very good point. But that must also be spelled out a bit more. When you read the first, say, twenty-two chapters of the first book, you have the impression that Thucydides writes from this premise: war

[xxiii] Aristotle *Politics* 1268b23-1269a28.

is a terribly important and serious business. And somehow—how do you put it?—blinders, he has blinders on. A professional general who is keen in war and in winning wars, and that is all. And from this point of view, the history of mankind is clearly a progress because wars were becoming bigger and better, which is I think confirmed by all the history after Thucydides, as I don't have to point out. And then when he comes to the twenty-third chapter—I mean, he has proven that beautifully by contrasting the most famous Greek war, the Trojan War, with the Peloponnesian War; that was truly a very ridiculous business, you know, the Trojan War compared with the Peloponnesian War.

And then, however, he has to face the difficulty created by a non-mythical, a non-poetic war, the Persian War. After all, it was a much more glorious war than the Peloponnesian War, as it turned out. But he has to show that his war, our war, the Peloponnesian War, is superior to the Persian War. In the Persian War there were four little battles and the war was over, and here twenty-seven years and how many killings, how many destructions of cities, how many exiles, and also he adds for good measure, how many earthquakes and eclipses of the sun and so on. So in other words, the superiority of the war, the Peloponnesian War, is proved by its superior destructiveness. Now if the progress has been proven chiefly with a view to a progress in war, i.e., in destructiveness, you can say that is also a doubt of progress. That is what you have been driving at.

Same Student: Yes, even men like Nicias, whom I assume would very much admire this great war, were impressed with the earthquakes and the natural things.

LS: Yes, that is good—omens, omens.

Same Student: Yes, omens. From Nicias's point of view this would indeed be a progress—

LS: What?

Same Student: The progress of warfare.

LS: Yes, sure, he was a general. The very pertinent question which is now being brought up is: How does this jibe with our earlier assertion that Nicias is the primary addressee of the book? Surely Nicias was old-fashioned as far as Athenians went, but in the first place he was a general, and in the second place, as we perhaps do not see clearly from Thucydides—except from the fact that he is a speaker, he can speak—he was also a sophisticated man. I mean, that we know most clearly from Plato's *Laches*. In other words, he was an up-to-date man, you know, so that creates no difficulty.

Student: I was interested in the connection between [. . .]

LS: Yes, that is parallel, and how did you interpret that?

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: No, Diodotus is not Thucydides. Diodotus can reflect Thucydides perhaps to a greater degree than any other speaker; he still is not Thucydides, you must not forget that. So let us then limit ourselves to Diodotus, and let us draw all conclusions from Diodotus without any fear. Now what would follow? You say he would be a Rousseau.

Same Student: There is a similarity. If Diodotus's position reflects Thucydides, and it does certainly with the increase of violence, then Thucydides is not precisely as close to Hobbes as it might look at first glance. [. . .] Rousseau, though I realize the difficulty because all kinds of things came in between there.

LS: Now why do we not put it on a broader basis? While Hobbes and Rousseau are more nearly known to us, that which is here of importance is not peculiar to either Hobbes or Rousseau. Now if Diodotus would be given the longest rope to hang himself—I mean, would be able to develop his doctrine fully, what would come out of it?

Same Student: Abolition.[xxiv]

LS: That is a practical conclusion, but as far as the premises go. A perfect beginning. A perfect beginning. And the other point is then an extremely imperfect beginning. Now these are not inventions of Hobbes and Rousseau; these are possibilities with which the Greeks were perfectly familiar.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but let us free our schema from the peculiarities of Hobbes and Rousseau. That is my only suggestion. Now what is the most well-known Greek notion corresponding to that which—

Student: The golden age.

LS: The golden age, the age of Kronos. Sure. And at the opposite pole we have the notion which is very clearly indicated in the Archaeology of Thucydides, and for which there is also other evidence in other writers. Now one can say this: generally speaking—there was only this great difficulty on the basis of myth—if you boost the age of Kronos, you get into troubles with Zeus. I mean, that was the great difficulty, as you know, because Zeus was the man who terminated that; that would create a difficulty. But generally speaking, if you take for example Plato, the suggestions at first glance are a good beginning, or more precisely, not a perfect beginning, but an imperfect and gentle beginning. And the other view was an imperfect and savage beginning. Now when one reads Plato more carefully, especially the *Laws* where this is most fully developed, one sees that Plato also believes in an imperfect and savage beginning. It comes out only step by step. But the serious question behind this point is this: the more terrible the beginnings were, the greater the human achievement, and the less terrible the beginnings were, the more gratitude for providence. Does this make sense? That is, I think, the issue behind it that makes it so important. In other words, what did they know about a thousand years before, to say

[xxiv] The transcriber is uncertain about this word, as a question mark in appears in parentheses immediately after it. The student might mean the abolition of capital punishment, as this is the only sense of "abolition" that makes sense in the context of Diodotus's speech.

nothing of ten thousand? Nothing. So the only guide they had was the human meaning of the two alternatives. Is this clear?

Student: I'm sorry, I didn't hear that last—

LS: I mean, they did not have any knowledge to speak of—I mean, some they had, of course, that is the argument of Thucydides. I mean, that they lived in a more barbaric manner, that they knew, but surely that was not detailed enough. But the light which they had was not derived from the facts, but from an understanding of the human meaning of the two opposed theories, and I will state them: a gentle beginning—gratitude to providence; a terrible beginning—a posture of revolt in the extreme case, but at least a sense of human achievement.

Student: Would you say a gratitude to progress rather than a gratitude to providence?

LS: Yes, all right, but in order to bring that out—to bring out the crucial implication, it is to the human achievement. That is the point. Now if we apply this to Diodotus, we would say the indication of Diodotus's view would be, if simply stated, a pious view. Now I do not believe that Diodotus is pious in the sense in which Nicias is pious but in the way in which Thucydides was pious, which you can say was very impious but which agrees with piety insofar as it agrees with the practical consequences of the pious attitude.

Same Student: Would you say gentleness?

LS: Gentleness and moderation, the immediate distrust of *hubris*.

Same Student: Would moderation be more intellectual, taking a chance [. . .]

LS: It is something very different, I would say, but connected. Gentleness is simply—one can say that gentleness is the opposite to cruelty, both to active and passive cruelty; I mean the desire to hurt others or indifference to the sufferings of others, whereas moderation is the opposite to *hubris*. In the narrow sense[9] moderation is taken, as in Aristotle's *Ethics*, for example, merely for continence regarding food, drink, and so on. That is the narrow meaning. That was not the original meaning, and the fuller meaning always asserts itself, not in Aristotle, but surely in Plato and also in Thucydides. When Thucydides speaks of Archidamus, the Spartan king, he was reputed to be [*sōphrōn*]. That does not for one moment mean that he was not indulgent regarding food and drink, not for one moment. [*Sōphrōn*] means here the moderation as a moral character—you know, when we read of Pericles, where the other word is used, *metriotēs*, you remember, then it does not refer to his character but it refers to the intellect, that he knew where to stop. You know, it is an intellectual virtue, if I may say so, not a moral virtue, although it is somewhat dangerous to apply these distinctions too—

Student: Is moderation intellectual in the sense that it involves a feeling of the whole? By the whole I mean the world—

LS: Perhaps one can enlarge—for example, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, book 4, I don't remember that exactly, there Xenophon says Socrates wished his young friends to be—before he

taught them anything about the political art and so on—to become moderate.[xxv] Moderation is then broken down into two things, piety and justice. That would come much closer to what you mean; in other words, it is a much broader thing. That is good, but I don't think it is used by Thucydides in this sense. I only hope I have made clear to you this point which is of some importance. But it is of course always difficult, although absolutely necessary, to go into those regions to which Thucydides only points and which he never sets forth as clearly as the siege of Syracuse and such matters, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't think about them.

Student: About the isle of Delos: Is it not possible to tie this up with the overall theme of rest and motion, the bringing in of horseracing and gymnastics being motion?

LS: I don't believe that this is immediately relevant, because the gymnastic thing was an old story of the olden times.

Same Student: But it was balanced in the olden times by the singing and by the poets, the representatives of rest. And you said, I think, when we went over it, that this time there was nothing in the text to denote music as being included.

LS: If you say that the intellectual pursuits in the widest sense belong rather to rest than to motion, I believe that you have good grounds. I will give only one example. In the last speech of Pericles he says, "You, the Athenian people, you have this opinion today and the other tomorrow, but I stand forth always the same." Very clearly. And this of course would be applied to every understanding, every insight, which is then restful, no longer change. Whereas mere opinions are floating; that is true, and to that extent I could accept what you say.

Student: It occurs to me that Thucydides, like Plato, had a certain antidemocratic quality, which is illustrated in this way, that the democracy banished three men: Themistocles, Thucydides himself, and Alcibiades.

LS: Well, surely Alcibiades deserved it. I mean, it was foolish of Athens to do it after having followed his advice.

Same Student: But there is only one person in Plato who suffered at the hands of democracy: Socrates.

LS: Yes, that is not quite so simple. It is of course the most visible in Plato, but when you read the *Laches*, for example, where [we see] Laches and Nicias, who are democratic generals but with great pro-Spartan leanings on different grounds—Laches because of his military interest, and Nicias because of his moral sympathies. And then they speak to two men, two ordinary Athenians who belong to the upper class but [are] in no way outstanding but the sons of famous fathers—the son of the older Thucydides, not a relative of ours, and the other was the son of Aristides. So these were the anti-democratic statesmen of the earlier generation. Aristides and Thucydides also got into trouble. The whole history of Athens was full—but indeed no action of the democracy was so impressive in Plato—but this is of course the other side which Plato also makes clear, that Socrates could live for seventy long years in Athens, [whereas] in Sparta he

[xxv] Xenophon *Memorabilia* 4.3.

would have been exposed as an infant, being not particularly handsome. In other words, Plato knew this. Yes, but what are you driving at? I think there is a very profound agreement between Plato and Thucydides.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: I think that shows—I think the field of immediate disagreement, which doesn't mean ultimate disagreement—is Thucydides's concentration on what we call foreign policy: the many cities, you know. The Platonic system—

Session 14: February 21, 1962
Book 7, chapters 1-42

Leo Strauss: Your paper was much closer to the nature of a report than an analysis.[i] One little point: you said twice that the Syracusians were becoming the aggressors; that is surely not the right expression for the fact that they are now on the offensive. These are two very different things. For instance, you cannot say that the British and the Americans became the aggressors at the end of the Second World War. This is only minor. Well, you pointed out the element of self-justification in Nicias's letter to Athens, which is I think correct, and you also saw that the Syracusians somehow become a kind of Athenians through the process. This might have been brought out more emphatically.

Now last time I received a paper by a student which I read and which I thought I should mention just now. In regard to Alcibiades's speech at Sparta, he remarks [on] the distorted meanings of words and accepted standards of which Thucydides has spoken coherently in book 3, chapter 82, as you will remember, i.e., the new interpretation of patriotism in Alcibiades's speech. Now according to this it is patriotic to fight against one's own city in order to come back to it. The point which the student makes is that this is a rather unexpected and interesting illustration of the change of the meaning of words which took place during the war. Another point, the student says that Nicias, more than any other figure of the history, approaches that higher of the opposites which Thucydides regarded not as stronger, but as more vulnerable, more delicate, than the lower. Now I do not know whether this judgment on Nicias can ultimately be maintained; we can decide it clearly, I believe, only next time when we come to the final analysis of Nicias. I believe that this might be based on something I wrote, but this point I have not brought up here which I think one should mention. Two opposites, motion and rest, are the most universal, but also Athens and Sparta and other things we have seen. Now it turns out that one of the two opposites is of higher rank. In the case of Athens and Sparta, I think that one can say that Athens occupies the higher rank. Now jumping quite a few miles—one could say that the opposites in Thucydides have this character, that their higher is not the stronger, the lower is the stronger.

Now you are of course already familiar with this view; that would ordinarily be understood by "materialism" whatever that may mean, that the lower is the stronger. Think of the cosmogony developed by the present-day scientist: infinitely long stretches where there is not even life, to say nothing of man. Man developed over a relatively short duration, and while developing all kinds of amazing powers, as we know, still he is powerless compared with the inhuman and inanimate scope of the universe. Now this is of course diametrically opposite to the Socratic and Aristotelian view, according to which there are also opposites, you can say, but the higher is the stronger. The soul or mind is higher and stronger than the body or matter, or whatever you call it. And this point we have not brought up in this seminar at all. Perhaps we will have an occasion to mention it later.

So now let us turn to a coherent discussion of this assignment. In the first chapter, the second part of it—roughly after the first sentence.

[i] Strauss responds to a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

Reader:
And it was resolved to go to Himera, the rather because the four Attic galleys, which Nicias, though he contemned them before, had now when he heard they were at Locri sent to wait for them, were not arrived yet at Rhegium. Having prevented this guard, they crossed the strait—[ii]

LS: Now let me see, what was that? Since the four Athenian ships were not yet present in Rhegium, Nicias's hopes—will you read that again, "And he decided to go to Himera"?[iii]

Reader:
And it was resolved to go to Himera, the rather because the four Attic galleys, which Nicias, though he contemned them before, had now when he heard they were at Locri sent to wait for them, were not yet arrived at Rhegium.

LS: I would say the combination of his false hopes and his slowness are observed there. At the end of chapter 2, where he says at the end of this chapter, "So close to danger had the Syracusians come." "So close"; in other words, it was touch and go. Well, I think it is fair to assume that under a quicker leader, Alcibiades, Syracuse would have been laid under siege already before, and there is a very high probability that it would have been conquered by the Athenians. In the next chapter, [1]in the fourth sentence of chapter 3, where Gylippus finds the Syracusians confused and not easily ordered.

Reader:
After this, they were putting themselves into order of battle one against another; but Gylippus, finding the Syracusians troubled and not easily falling into their ranks, led back his army in a more open ground. Nicias led not the Athenians out against him, but lay still at his own fortification.[iv]

LS: That which he translated as "lay still" is in Greek [*hēsychaze*], "he remained at rest." At rest. In the next chapter, about the fifth sentence, where Nicias finds it good to go against the Plemmyrians[v] . . .

Reader:
Also it seemed good to Nicias to fortify the place called Plemmyrium. It is a promontory over against the city, which, shooting into the entrance of the great haven, straiteneth the mouth of the same; which fortified, he thought would facilitate the bringing in of necessaries to the army. For by this means, their galleys might ride nearer to the haven of the Syracusians, and not upon every motion of the navy of the enemies to be to come out against them, as they were before, from the bottom of the [great] haven. And he had his mind set chiefly now upon the war by sea, seeing his hopes by land diminished since the arrival of Gylippus.[vi]

[ii] Thucydides 7.1.
[iii] There may be some confusion here, as Strauss seems to speak as if Nicias had decided to go to Himera, whereas it is in fact the Spartan commander Gylippus, newly arrived on the scene, who decides to do so.
[iv] Thucydides 7.3.
[v] There are no "Plemmyrians," Plemmyrium being merely the name of a promontory on the Great Harbor of Syracuse.
[vi] Thucydides 7.4.

LS: More literally: "The affairs relating to the land being more hopeless." More hopeless. He has hopes, then, regarding the sea. Now Gylippus enters the scene very definitely, and the informal speech of Gylippus to which you referred in your paper [is] in the next chapter. And after the Syracusians and the allies were defeated. Do you have that?

Reader:
The Syracusians and their confederates being overcome, and the Athenians having given them truce to take up their dead and erected a trophy, Gylippus assembled the army and told them that this was not theirs, but his own fault, who, by pitching the battle so far within the fortifications, had deprived them of the use both of their cavalry and darters; and that therefore he meant to bring them on again, and wished them to consider that for forces they were nothing inferior to the enemy; and for courage—[vii]

LS: We can stop here. You rightly said that this shows Gylippus's intelligence, that he makes clear that it was his fault lest the army be unreasonably discouraged. But there is another point which should strike us here. Has the speaker for next time read his assignment yet?

Student: Yes, I have.

LS: What about Gylippus's speeches altogether?

Same Student: The main point which I would see here which would be the same in my half of the book is the emphasis on courage.

LS: Yes, let me explore this a bit further. Does Gylippus in your section address the army?

Same Student: He is never quoted directly.

LS: There is no formal speech of Gylippus. Now in the second half it seems to be different; we will discuss that when we come to it. I would say, contrary to the appearance, that Gylippus is never given a formal speech by Thucydides in the way in which so many commanders—like Pagondas—who don't play any role[viii] are given such a speech. This calls for some explanation, because in a way Gylippus is absolutely decisive for the land victory of the anti-Athenians in Sicily. Think of that other great Spartan commander we have met before, you know, what about Brasidas as a speaker? Five speeches. And Thucydides even says something about him as he speaks.

Same Student: [. . .]

[vii] Thucydides 7.5.3-4.

[viii] There is a fairly lengthy blank space in the transcript here; possibly some words were inaudible. This seems unfairly dismissive of Pagondas, who commanded the Boeotian forces in their signal victory over the Athenians at Delium, and whose speech at 4.92 makes according to Strauss's own analysis an important contribution to that outcome.

LS: Yes, he was a good speaker, although measured by Spartan standards. Now it seems to be reasonable that Gylippus was not a speaker at all. He was laconic. Now at the end of chapter 8, the last half of chapter 8, let us read that.

Reader:
And fearing lest such as he sent, through want of utterance or judgment—

LS: "He" means Nicias.

Reader:
or through desire to please the multitude, should deliver things otherwise than they were, he wrote unto them a letter, conceiving that thus the Athenians should best know his mind, whereof no part could now be suppressed by the messenger, and might therefore enter into deliberation upon true grounds. With these letters and other their instructions, the messengers took their journey. And Nicias, in the meantime having a care to the well guarding of his camp, was wary of entering into any voluntary dangers.[ix]

LS: Nicias now is completely in his element: conservative, preservative, resting, and no risk. Caution is the only principle of action, the only way to salvation. But only, as is made clear at the end of the first sentence of this chapter—what does Thucydides say here about Nicias's thoughts?

Reader:
Nicias perceiving this and seeing the strength of the enemy and his own necessities daily increasing, he also sent messengers to Athens, both at other times and often, upon the occasion of every action that passed, and now especially, as finding himself in danger, and that unless they quickly sent for those away that were there already, or sent a great supply unto them, there was no hope of safety.[x]

LS: There was no safety; "hope" is not here in the text. So caution is the only way to salvation, but only if the army is called back very soon or another very large army is very soon sent. So the caution of Nicias is based on great quickness of the other side. Others must have that quality which he conspicuously lacks. His caution is based on hopes. Without hopes he would have made the decision to return at the risk of being capitally punished by the Athenian *demos* a long time ago. Not obliged to take orders because he had full discretionary command, he waits for orders. He is a good citizen but not a statesman, for he induces the Athenians now to invest still more troops and money and ships in what he regards as an adventure. In other words, he first gives the Athenians the alternative of either saving the army there or a new investment. He does not say the situation is so risky that they have to call it back.

Student: Isn't there a sense in which Nicias was a coward?

LS: Sure, if you use such a harsh word—

[ix] Thucydides 7.8.
[x] Thucydides 7.8.

Same Student: Before the assembly, and here again,—

LS: Yes, sure. But you see, that is perfectly correct, but the reason why I tremble to use that word is thinking of my own self. What would I have done in such a situation? But one can rightly say that that is an irrelevant consideration, and we have to forget about ourselves and undergo a training in objective judgment, even if it would lead to our own capital condemnation. We have to say what you say.

Student: You said, "in what Nicias regards as an adventure." Is the present [. . .]

LS: It is much more than an adventure now, it is an almost hopeless stand. Now we come then to the letter which he writes to the Athenians, a fairly long letter. Let us read a few passages from that in chapter 12, beginning after the second sentence.

Reader:
For though our fleet (which they also have heard) were vigorous at first, both for soundness of the galleys and entireness of the men, yet our galleys are now soaked with lying so long in the water and our men consumed. For we want the means to haul a-land our galleys and trim them, because the galleys of the enemy, as good as ours and more in number, do keep us in a continual expectation of assault, which they manifestly endeavour. And seeing it is in their own choice to attempt or not, they have therefore liberty to dry their galleys at their pleasure; for they lie not, as we, in attendance upon others.[xi]

LS: Now here the question arises which I, lacking expertness in naval warfare in general and Greek naval warfare in particular, is this: Why could not he have taken the initiative? That is hard to see, why the Syracusians were active and kept their galleys in good shape by virtue of activity and he just was sitting around. Or is there a simple naïve disclosure of his own congenital inactivity? That I do not know.

Student: What could Nicias do by sea? His whole campaign was orientated about the land. The only thing he could do by sea was go home.

LS: He could fight the Syracusian navy, couldn't he? Is this not possible? I mean, could not he do to the Syracusian navy what the Syracusian navy did to him: keep them locked in the harbor until their galleys would—

Same Student: He didn't occupy the wings of the harbor.

LS: You think it was tactically impossible.[xii]

Same Student: Also I think there is a point that [. . .]

LS: Yes, but they were on land, and the danger exists everywhere.

[xi] Thucydides 7.12.
[xii] It is worth noting that on Demosthenes's arrival on the scene, he is sharply critical of Nicias for not having taken the offensive against the Syracusians (7.42.3).

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: I cannot [. . .] I would like to hear someone who has studied about that and knows more about it. Let us turn to chapter 14; we have to read only a brief paragraph.

Reader:
"To you I write, who know how small a time any fleet continueth in the height of vigour, and how few of the mariners are skillful both how to hasten the course of a galley and how to contain the oar. But of all, my greatest trouble is this: that being general—"[xiii]

LS: [. . .]

Reader:
"I can neither make them do better (for your natures are hard to be governed) nor get mariners in any other place—"

LS: Nicias is unable to command Athenians whose natures are hard to command, and that is if course part of the whole story. That applies not only to the soldiers and sailors in Sicily, but it applies of course above all to the Athenians at home. A bit later—start with next paragraph.

Reader:
"I could have written to you other things more pleasing than these, but not more profitable, seeing it is necessary for you to know certainly the affairs here when you go to council upon them. Withal, because I know your natures to be such as though you love to hear the best, yet afterwards when things fall not out accordingly you will call in question them that write it, I thought best to write the truth for my own safety's sake."

LS: Yes, it is safer to make manifest the truth. His fear of the Athenians—they are hard to rule—and his fear of the Athenians' resentfulness. This explains why his urging the Athenians to call off the Sicilian campaign was much weaker than his calling for a larger army and navy, and for a successor for himself. I mean, when you read the letter as a whole there are two alternate policies: calling back their expeditionary force from Sicily, and sending a new one. The whole emphasis is on the latter, which from his point of view was the most foolish thing, and that was a fundamental concession to the nature of the Athenians as he saw it.

Student: Couldn't one make the observation that regardless of what was done, Nicias had hopes of being saved, because if they called back the army he would be safe, and even if they sent another army he would be replaced and also be saved?

LS: Yes, that is true. I mean, this element of hope is absolutely crucial and will come out later very, very clearly. Well, one only has to see the beginning of chapter 15, immediately where we left off.

Reader:

[xiii] Thucydides 7.14.

"And now think thus: that though we have carried ourselves, both captains and soldiers, in that for which we came at first hither, unblameably, yet since all Sicily is united against us and another army expected out of Peloponnesus, you must resolve (for those we have here are not enough for the enemy's present forces) either to send for these away, or to send hither another army, both of land and sea soldiers, no less than the former, and money not a little; and also a general to succeed me, who am able no longer to stay here, being troubled with the stone [in the kidneys]." [xiv]

LS: Now here you see by merely counting the words, how many words are devoted to the second proposal, and no detailed plans are made in any way as to how the salvation of the army there by being called back to Athens could be achieved. At the beginning of chapter 18 we find another point of broad importance.

Reader:
The Lacedaemonians, as they intended before, and being also instigated to it by the Syracusians and Corinthians, upon advertisement now of the Athenians' new supply for Sicily, prepared likewise to invade Attica, thereby to divert them. And Alcibiades also importunately—

LS: "Also" is not there. "Also" must be deleted.[xv]

Reader:
urged the fortifying of Decelea, and by no means to war remissly.[xvi]

LS: So you see Alcibiades is really the driving force. One can say that the Athenian disaster in Sicily is due to two things: first, to an Athenian directing the anti-Athenian strategy, Alcibiades; and, secondly, to the transformation of the Syracusians into Athenians. It is a defeat of Athens through a victory of the Athenian principle.

Student: Nicias might be a sort of Spartan character.

LS: He is. He is. I mean, Archidamus and Nicias, I believe, would . . .

Same Student: One could imagine them having a glass of wine together on a summer evening very easily.

LS: The Spartans didn't drink!

Same Student: They did . . .

LS: I suppose that happened when a Spartan was entirely alone, not in company.

Same Student: You said the Syracusians were transformed into Athenians—

[xiv] Thucydides 7.15.
[xv] The Greek copulative *kai* ("and") can also function as an adverb implying "also": so Hobbes chooses to interpret it here.
[xvi] Thucydides 7.18.

LS: We will come to that, we will come to that.

Same Student: Because it struck me, this point of Thucydides when he says [. . .] that the Syracusians were very much like unto the Athenians, and this I guess would have to be raised.

LS: Yes, but just as Athens became Athens through the Persian War. Now the sequel is of utmost importance for the work as a whole.

Reader:
But the Lacedaemonians were heartened thereunto principally—

LS: "Principally"—"mostly." "But mostly" . . . In other words, what is even more important than Alcibiades's policy, that is the point here.

Reader:
because they thought the Athenians having in hand a double war, one against them and another against the Sicilians, would be the easier pulled down, and because they conceived the breach of the last peace was in themselves. For in the former war, the injury proceeded from their own side, in that the Thebans had entered Plataea in time of peace; and because also, whereas it was inserted in the former articles that arms should not be carried against such as would stand trial of judgment, they had refused such trial when the Athenians offered it. And they thought all their misfortunes had deservedly befallen them for that cause, remembering amongst others, the calamity at Pylus.[xvii]

LS: Now this we must understand; it is absolutely crucial for the understanding of Sparta. I mean, apart from all calculations—you know, military calculations—Athens has now a double war on their hands; there is this other consideration which Thucydides develops at great detail later. In the first part of the war they were at fault in their opinion, and what was the consequence of their being at fault in the first war?

Student: Low morale.

LS: That is not how it would appear to the Spartan mind; that is modern psychology.

Student: The invasion of Pylos.

LS: Yes, and other misfortunes, other disasters. But what is the link between the two? Guilt and disaster, what is the link?

Student: Every time they were defeated they thought it was the result of [a] past act.

LS: But still, there are two elements, guilt and disaster. How are they related? Punishment. Disaster is punishment. As he puts it here, they were deservedly unfortunate. That is the point. That is essential to Sparta. And now, what was the guilt? Two facts are mentioned here.

[xvii] Thucydides 7.18.

Student: Thebes on the one hand, and that they didn't stand a trial of judgment on the other.

LS: Yes, but these two subjects have been discussed quite a bit; and here we have the final statement on it, and therefore we have to make it perfectly clear what it is about. Now first, regarding Thebes. What was the last statement we had read about that? It was in the first book when he stated the beginning of the war.

Student: There he pointed out that the real beginning of the war was the invasion of Attica.

LS: It did not say explicitly, but he implied it. And what was the reason for excluding Thebes as an illegal act?

Student: I think one could make an analogy between the first truce and the truce you read about here—

LS: Excuse me, we must first clarify the Plataean business.

Student: The case of aggression was not clear because the Thebans were invited in by high-ranking citizens.

LS: That was it seems Thucydides's view, but the Spartans did not recognize that. The Spartans apparently took a more legal position than Thucydides takes. The government for the time being is the state. So if the government at that time was democratic and it was only an oligarchic clique who called them in, and the Spartans are here more correct, saying it was not the formal government who called you in and therefore it was a hostile act. That was the first part. Does it become clear? After all, look at the kind of things you have today when in some cases you do not know who the government is, you know, and each party can say they were called in by . . . And now we come to the second point.

Student: I was just going to say that it became clear when the second truce was broken that no one regarded the truce [. . .] the real crucial factor in the breaking of the truce was when the Athenians touched down on Spartan territory. I think they interpreted the truce that way the first time [. . .]

LS: Because it was clearly stated in the truce. I mean, if there were some complications, as you had at Corcyra, for example, where Athenians and Corinthians fought against each other but there was no violation of the truce because [2]there was the fighting between the Corcyraeans and the Corinthians, and the Athenians happened to be the allies of the Corcyraeans so that was not formally a violation of the truce between Corinth and Athens. But we don't need to go back to the complicated story of the beginning of the second war. It was clear from the first book that the Athenians offered to give an account of what they did—I mean, what is now called to stand trial, to negotiate and to find out whether the Athenians had done anything against the truce—and the Spartans didn't avail themselves of the offer. Archidamus wanted them to avail themselves of the offer. Instead the Spartans sent an emissary to Athens and demanded from the Athenians the purification from their own curse, which had nothing whatever to do with the issue at hand: Did

the Athenians by their Corcyraean and Potidaean action violate the terms of the truce? And there was no question of that. So this I think now is perfectly clear, the Spartans themselves have now confessed that they were the aggressors in the first war. So by the only clear criterion, the criterion of solemn treaties, whether in another sense the Athenians were aggressors by their imperialistic policy, that cannot be decided, because it is, according to Thucydides's own speech, everyone who can expand will expand. Sparta had done her expansion in the past. Expansion is unjust only if it is done in transgression of a solemn treaty.

You remember in the first book there were three causes of war: the deepest—that was fear of Athens' power—that was translegal. Then the solemn treaties, that is strictly legal. And then, third, the affair with the curse; you know, where Pericles replies to the Spartans' demands with two demands of his own that the Spartans had to take care of two curses. But then in the second book we found a fourth cause, which was practically not mentioned at all in the first book, and that was the war is a war of liberation from the tyrant city. And that implied again a clear notion of justice. You remember? Each Greek city has a right to live under its own laws and have its own government; and that of course was also very difficult to maintain given the great inequalities between peoples, given all kinds of relations of dependence between cities, to say nothing of the Spartan conquest of Messenia centuries ago. We must not forget this entirely.

At the end of chapter 19—read the last sentence of chapter 19.

Reader:
Now the twenty-five Corinthian galleys that were manned in winter lay opposite to the twenty galleys of Athens which were at Naupactus till such time as the men of arms in the ships from Peloponnesus might get away; for which purpose they were also set out at first, that the Athenians might not have their minds upon these ships so much as upon the galleys.[xviii]

LS: Read now the end of chapter 17.

Reader:
The Corinthians manned five-and-twenty galleys to present battle to the fleet that kept watch at Naupactus, that the ships with the men of arms, whilst the Athenians attended these galleys so embattled against them, might pass by unhindered.[xix]

LS: Such cases of course occur very often in Thucydides. It just struck me in this particular case. The later statement, only two pages later, seems to be a mere repetition of the first. Now I regard it as impossible that a writer like Thucydides merely repeats himself. He didn't get a dollar a line, or he was surely not a prolix writer as we have had more than one occasion to observe. What is it, what is the difference? Let us not hesitate to use a simple pedantic word.

Student: The first time he mentions presenting battle [. . .]

LS: Yes, but what strikes me more obviously is in chapter 17 the plan, and in chapter 19 the execution. That is the difference, but that of course would in no way be sufficient. Now when

[xviii] Thucydides 7.19.
[xix] Thucydides 7.17.

you look at the plan at the end of chapter 17—no, you would have to read also the preceding paragraph, which we cannot do, in chapter 17. He speaks first of the Corinthians—there must have been something here which I am not able to recognize now. I have here a note to the effect that in the first case, in chapter 17, and also in chapter 18, he describes the plans whereby the Corinthians deceived the Spartans. Oh, yes, in chapter 19 as a whole—sorry. The Spartans come first and the Corinthians afterward. That is only a somewhat imprecise statement of the question, the turning around of the order: Corinthians, Spartans in the plan, and in the execution, the Corinthians first. This would require exploration. In other words, one cannot merely read it and say that Thucydides repeats himself. You must see what is the difference between the first and the second statement and see whether this difference is not of some importance for the understanding of the whole. The Spartans take precedence here in the execution. The Spartans are no longer slow; I think it is supposed to mean that.

In chapter 21 we find two other speeches which are not formal speeches. If you will read that beginning from the second sentence.

Reader:
And having assembled the Syracusians, he told them that they ought to man as many galleys as they could and make trial of a battle by sea; and that he hoped thereby to perform somewhat to the benefit of the war which should be worthy the danger. Hermocrates also was none of the least means of getting them to undertake the Athenians with their navy, who told them that neither the Athenians had this skill by sea hereditary or from everlasting, but were more inland men than the Syracusians, and forced to become seamen by the Medes—

LS: Is this not interesting, how the tables are turned? The Athenians are not primarily sailors, whereas the Syracusians are, so to speak, by nature sailors—more Athenian than the Athenians.

Reader:
and that to daring men, such as the Athenians are, they are most formidable that are as daring against them; for wherewith they terrify their neighbours, which is not always the advantage of power, but boldness of enterprizing, with the same shall they in like manner be terrified of their enemies. He knew it, he said, certainly, that the Syracusians, by their unexpected daring to encounter the Athenian navy, would get more advantage in respect of the fear it would cause than the Athenians should endamage them by odds of skill.[xx]

LS: The daring is now entirely on the anti-Athenian side. The roles are reversed. Athens is defeated by her enemy's adopting the Athenian principle.

Student: Isn't it sort of interesting that Hermocrates is one of the leaders in bringing about this change? He himself is a member of the oligarchical party. He more or less cuts his throat in a way, because he seems to get less and less important as time goes on—in power, i.e., the maritime nation will have associations with democracy.[xxi]

[xx] Thucydides 7.21.
[xxi] The transcriber inserts a question mark in parentheses at the end of the student's comment.

LS: If one can assume that, which is not a bad assumption. But did it not strike you altogether that Hermocrates is barely mentioned?

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: I have even been wondering whether he was not in favor, whether he did not have some connections with Nicias—I was contemplating that. I believe there is no evidence for that, however.

Same Student: Well, Thucydides says at the end that one of the reasons why they killed Nicias was some suspicion that he had been negotiating among the Syracusians.

LS: Yes, that I know, but the question is, of course, whether Hermocrates had anything to do with that.[xxii] The case is by no means completely—Hermocrates wanted to have a startling victory, that is clear. Now one more point lest I forget it. We must also see here in the informal speeches the contrast between the very brief speech by Gylippus and the very extensive speech by Hermocrates; I think the relation is roughly one to six, or so. That only with the view to the question, is Gylippus a great orator or just a silent soldier.

Same Student: The point interested me that was made by Hermocrates—that the Athenians were more on land before they became seamen, and were not by nature seamen. This came up earlier, but it is very important, it seems to me, for the understanding of the Athenian character as such—that[3] they came late to their power, and they were, you could almost say, an old-fashioned community who ultimately took on these strange ways very late.

LS: Yes, that is perfectly clear; but Thucydides makes this marvelously clear, that Athens became the Athens we know of only after the Persian War. And Aristotle, by the way, confirms this by his discussion in the seventh book of the *Politics*, or the eighth—the eighth, where he speaks of the change of the education in Athens, the old-fashioned education and the new education as well.[xxiii] The change took place in Athens after the Persian War. That great victory increased Athenian self-confidence, daring, willingness to innovate also in education [. . .] You must, however, remember that this is all [a] colonial country—Sicily, and there is a certain similarity between Sicily and this country, and mainland Greece and Europe, and that is quite interesting.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Not necessarily; that overlaps.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: That is not the point. The point is this is a colonial country where people have a very high start from the beginning. Plato's *Critias* is a very interesting document of that. The *Critias*, of

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[xxii] There is no suggestion in the text of Hermocrates's complicity in the (traitorous) negotiations of some Syracusians with Nicias. They were democrats, while he was a leader of the city's oligarchic faction.
[xxiii] Aristotle *Politics* 1341a 26-37.

course, does not deal with Sicily but with [Atlantis]. Atlantis was the fabulous big island in the Atlantic Ocean which played a role also in the imagination of many generations. I think also a role, if I remember well, in Columbus—although Columbus of course thought also of India—but this notion of a big island outside of the straits of Gibraltar. But nevertheless, one can I think show that Atlantis as described there is a super-Sicily, a big island in the west. But whereas the Sicilian expedition was an unjust war of Athens against a big island in the west where Athens deservedly perished, in this story the Atlantis people are the unjust people, attacking Athens thousands of years before and of course being deservedly defeated. So Athens became the winner of a glorious victory in a just war, and this story is told by a man called Critias—not the Critias we know,[xxiv] his grandfather probably, but still, Critias is Critias, the rival of Alcibiades. So whereas Alcibiades ruined Athens, Critias—well, he doesn't exactly save Athens, he only tells the story told to him by an Egyptian priest of the salvation of Athens. I think the description of the city, the capital of Atlantis, is mod[eled on] the description of Syracuse. I have forgotten now all the details, but that was my distinct impression.

Student: Since you bring the question up, I can't help but remember that in the *Critias* the old Athens was destroyed by a god.

LS: Yes, but that is an enormous cataclysm or something like that.

Student: In other words, it wasn't destroyed by—

LS: That is standard. How this jibes with other things is a long question and is an important question.

Student: Would it be stretching a point too far to compare the walls around the city of Atlantis—their similarity to the walls around Plataea?

LS: I don't know, but it reminds me of a description of Syracuse. There is a description of Syracuse, I believe in Strabo, and there seem to be very striking similarities.

Student: I thought it was interesting to notice how Athens got rid of Themistocles by banishment and how because Syracuse is more [. . .]

LS: Later on he[xxv] will be banished.

Same Student: Yes, but first he sort of fades away. Right at the peak of Themistocles's career, he is banished. This seems to show that Athens at that time was a far more traditional society than Syracuse was at this particular period.

LS: That is questionable.

[xxiv] Critias the son of Callaeschrus (ca. 460-403 BCE), Athenian poet, sophist, and politician, in his youth a student of Socrates. His long career in Athenian politics culminated in his membership in the Thirty Tyrants, oligarchs who briefly ruled Athens as puppets of Sparta following the Peloponnesian War.
[xxv] Evidently Hermocrates; cf. Thucydides 8.85.3.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: I don't know. Surely—I mean, Sicily was the land of rhetoric, Leontini . . . was the home town of Gorgias. And Athens at this time didn't have this kind of thing, you know. At the time of the Persian Wars it didn't have teachers of rhetoric or anything of this sort. Tragedy was slowly beginning.

Student: There is one thing here—well, I don't know what to make of it. But Nicias, why the Athenians kept Nicias where he was: I wonder whether it has something to do with the fact that Nicias had this reputation for being lucky.

LS: And solid.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: But he was never in such a tough spot. Never.

Same Student: But I was wondering also whether there isn't some kind of Thucydidean message about the fact that if you want luck, you have to get to go chasing after it. That people who count on luck have to have daring, too; that you can't sit tight and hope for luck. This somehow doesn't work.

LS: You mean from the Athenian point of view.

Same Student: From any point of view. But this is what is happening now—that Nicias's luck has become such an illusion from the Athenian point of view that [. . .] they lose the momentum of their daring which gave them some justification[4] [for] counting on luck in an earlier time.

LS: [. . .] The point which you made first. Nicias is supposed to be lucky. Now there is of course a connection in Nicias's mind between his luck and his piety, and it is possible that this was shared to some extent by the Athenians. It was a kind of insurance to have this friend of the gods as a commander. But that would then only be another stimulus to Athenian daring.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: That's all right, but in this case if they need him so badly then the envy recedes. There are very many examples of that. For example, if people are envious of a very rich man, this envy becomes less poisonous when he helps them, at least in most cases. In some cases it gets worse.

Same Student: We hear that Nicias has honor as a soldier, but Thucydides never shows it to us, and in fact when the Athenians include Nicias in the command of the Syracusian expedition, it was a modification to some extent of the daring that they were showing in mounting the expedition at all. It seems to me that there is a suggestion throughout Thucydides—and this is why I'm convinced that Alcibiades is to some extent its hero—and that is that if you were going to do it properly, with alacrity and speed, with élan, you may come to grips, but you'll never know that until you've tried and failed.

LS: But still, rightly prepared. Perhaps not down to the last shoelace, but almost.

Same Student: And this is why when you raise the question of fragility and achievement of the idea of rest and motion, that again this is the embodiment of Alcibiades.

LS: Yes, sure. But the point is this: If you could isolate Alcibiades from the Athenian *demos*, he could have won. Or in other words, if Alcibiades had become the tyrant of Athens. That is possible. But in studying the failure of Athens one cannot isolate the treason of Alcibiades from the Athenian demos.

Same Student: Yes, but here is a question of the standards by which you judge Alcibiades's behavior as treason. Alcibiades was always totally loyal to himself—

LS: That you can also say of Mr. Capone.

Same Student: Yes . . .

LS: But that doesn't lead us very far. There is a book by my colleague Morton Grodzins on the loyalty question, *The Loyal and the Disloyal*, where you find two views of loyalty.[xxvi] One is the one that you just sketched: there is not a single human being who is not loyal to someone. He doesn't go so far as you do to say that loyalty to oneself is also loyalty, but he would say at least to some other people, his family or something.

Same Student: Well, I think there is a sense in which Alcibiades embodied Athens, and he was totally loyal to his idea of what Athens ought to be.

LS: Still, I would say, if I may finish the end, the other part of the argument, he understands by loyalty what the American law would understand by loyalty: loyalty to the United States. You could not blame Alcibiades for not rushing back to Athens to stand trial. That was one thing, because he surely would have been condemned to death, there was no question. But to go over to the enemy and to become the chief instrument of the destruction of Athens, this I think goes a bit beyond what can be reconciled with any notion of loyalty. After all, Demosthenes had to suffer from that; Thucydides himself had to suffer from that, and they didn't do it. There is a line, I believe, which we must draw.

Same Student: What I was looking for before was a well-known proverb, that Nicias's reliance on luck, believing he was lucky because he was pious—I would have stated that to Thucydides [that] is an illusion and that Thucydides is really much closer to saying that "God helps those who help themselves."

LS: Well . . . By the way, I think now you misstated Nicias's view. Nicias, believing that he was favored by the gods, knew also that the gods are jealous, and that will become very clear later.

[xxvi] Morton Grodzins, *The Loyal and the Disloyal: Social Boundaries of Patriotism and Treason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956). A leading political scientist of the day, Grodzins's exploration of the theme of loyalty was a response to McCarthyism.

And therefore he did not want to arouse the jealousy of the gods and not[5] become the commander in the Sicilian expedition. You know, after having reached the point, the peak of his own prosperity and renown, beyond which he had no dreams whatever, he wanted to preserve that and die a most respected Athenian citizen—you know, the elder statesman. And you could perhaps see some contemporary parallels to that. And then he is drafted into it. But we must now continue. Then Plemmyrium is taken by the Syracusians and this has a very grave effect on the Athenians.

Everything depends now on finishing the war in Sicily, from the Syracusian point of view, before the new Athenian army arrives. And of course the arrival of the new army—no, I'm sorry, from the Athenian point of view—before the new Spartan army arrives. And the arrival of the new Athenian army will only contribute to the magnitude of the Athenian disaster. In chapter 27, the last sentence, which is the beginning of chapter 28. This is the situation in Attica now. The Athenians were deprived of the whole countryside. At the end of chapter 27.

Reader:
And by the continual going out of the Athenian horsemen, making their excursions to Decelea and defending the country, their horses became partly lamed through incessant labour in rugged grounds and partly wounded by the enemy.[xxvii]

And their provision, which formerly they used to bring in from Euboea by Oropus the shortest way, through Decelea by land, they were now forced to fetch in by sea at great cost about the promontory of Sunium. And whatsoever the city was wont to be served withal from without, it now wanted, and instead of a city was become as it were a fort.[xxviii]

LS: Athens has ceased to be *the* city, the greatest city. Let us read the sequel, please.

Reader:
And the Athenians, watching on the battlements of the wall, in the day time by turns, but in the night, both winter and summer, all at once (except the horsemen), part at the walls and part at the arms, were quite tired.

LS: Now could this have happened—now could this not have happened already under Pericles' strategic plan?

Same Student: It could have, but it wouldn't have happened.

LS: Why not? That is important, because it was feasible, and the Spartans didn't need a navy.

Same Student: Archidamus.

LS: Yes, that is one way of putting it.

[xxvii] Thucydides 7.27.
[xxviii] Thucydides 7.28.

Same Student: Well, I think the Spartans would stay in Attica as long as the Peloponnesus was continually raided.

LS: They didn't need so many troops for that; after all, they still had the truce with Argos. But I would put it this way: Pericles took that risk; he knew the Spartans. There was no Alcibiades behind the Spartans.

Same Student: One Spartan man suggested that they fortify—[xxix]

LS: Yes, but nothing came out of it. And the sequel now.

Reader:
But that which pressed them most was that they had two wars at once. And yet their obstinacy was so great as no man would have—[xxx]

LS: Their love of victory, their love of victory.[xxxi]

Reader:
believed till now they saw it. For being besieged at home from the fortification of the Peloponnesians, no man would have imagined that they should not only have recalled their army out of Sicily, but have also besieged Syracuse there, a city of itself no less than Athens; and therein so much have exceeded the expectation of the rest of the Grecians both in power and courage—

LS: Daring.

Reader:
(who in the beginning of this war conceived that if the Peloponnesians invaded their territory, some of them, that they might hold out two years, other three, no man more), as that in the seventeenth year after they were first invaded they should have undertaken an expedition into Sicily, and being every way weakened already by the former war, have undergone another, not inferior to that which they had before with the Peloponnesians.

LS: This comment is a kind of last statement about this, but we will come across similar things in book 8, when after the Sicilian disaster Athens will still be unvanquished, to the consternation of all her enemies. Her love of victory and daring surpassed all expectations.

Now then there comes in chapter 29, which we unfortunately cannot read, the story of Mycalessus, one of the most moving stories in the book. Well, the Athenians' finances were bad. A detachment of Thracians arrive too late for going to Sicily and they are sent home because it would cost money—and have no use. And they are being transported north, and on the way north they land in enemy territory; and a perfectly peaceful small town, Mycalessus, is invaded and

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[xxix] In fact it was the Corinthians who had so suggested, in their second speech at Sparta (Thucydides 1.122.1).
[xxx] Thucydides 7.28.3.
[xxxi] Strauss's rendering of Hobbes's *obstinacy;* the Greek is *philonikia.*

really destroyed by these savages, and especially a school there, a school where boys were, and all these boys are murdered. And the school was a very large school for such a small town. And that contrast between the savages and the Greek school. Perhaps we will read the last sentence of that.

Reader:
Insomuch as there was put in practice at this time, besides other disorder, all forms of slaughter that could be imagined; they likewise fell upon the schoolhouse, which was in the city a great one, and the children newly entered into it; and killed them every one. And the calamity of the whole city, as it was as great as ever befell any, so also was it more unexpected and more bitter.[xxxii]

LS: By the way, here this word "confusion"—that corresponds to it—it is a special form of this general thing called "motion": motion, disturbance, confusion. Now motion is the opposite of rest; confusion is the opposite of order. This suggests a connection between order and rest, or rest and order, which we should perhaps keep in mind.

Student: Could I ask a question which has been bothering me for a long time. Isn't Thucydides kin to the Thracians? Didn't his family—

LS: Yes, but of the Greeks there, not of the savages.[xxxiii]

Same Student: In other words, a large settlement. I thought I'd check it on a map.

LS: No, no, he had to do with the Greek settlers there. The barbarians indulged their savagery without fear because there is no enemy around. And at Athenian expense they are paid [. . .] in the midst of Greece. The large school in a small city: that is an illustration of what Greekness means. The destruction of Mycalessus is a disaster not smaller than any other disaster in this context. That means, not smaller than the Athenian disaster in Sicily. Another indication—a disaster which befalls men and without hubris. In the case of the Athenians you could say the disaster was a punishment for hubris; in the case of Mycalessus you could not possibly say that. At the end of chapter 30, when he takes up again the disaster of Mycalessus—do you have that, the last sentence?

Reader:
Thus went the matter of Mycalessus, the loss which it received being, for the quantity of the city, no less to be lamented than any that happened in the whole war.[xxxiv]

[xxxii] Thucydides 7.29.
[xxxiii] The name of Thucydides's father, Olorus, was a Thracian rather than a Greek one. As such it must have reflected his descent from the barbarian king so named who had married his daughter to the Athenian notable Miltiades, son of Cypselus, whom the Thracians had appointed their tyrant (cf. Herodotus *History* 6.34-39*).* In other words, Thucydides was descended from both a barbarian king and one of the most illustrious families of Athens.
[xxxiv] Thucydides 7.30.

LS: Here very surely is a judgment which Thucydides makes in his own name. The pathos of Mycalessus, that which Mycalessus suffered, is "no less worthy of lament" relative to the size of the city than any other event in the war. The question arises: Can and should size affect compassion? What about a single family, a single child butchered? There is surely a smaller number of people hurt and perhaps therefore a smaller number of people eager for revenge—the people immediately affected—but what about the compassion of the onlooker? How come that it should increase with the size of the butchery? It is also mentioned here the aggravating character of the unexpectedness. They live in deep peace.[xxxv] The disaster in Sicily could be expected, because war is always a gamble, as was said more than once. Differently stated: Is Nicias as worthy of compassion—as innocent, as we would say—as the children in Mycalessus? We must keep this in mind.

Student: I was going to say that we saw in the first book that size is not necessarily the measure of greatness.

LS: Of power, no. That is an entirely different consideration. You cannot make any inference from the size of a city to its power; that is an entirely different consideration.

Same Student: Well, insofar as greatness can be compared to—

LS: "Greatness" he didn't say. "Size," "power." He said "power." That I believe is a different consideration.

Student: I was wondering, when I was a child I remember the preacher gave a sermon on the Bible in which the, or some, Hebrews were condemned because they had destroyed the cattle of their enemies. Now I wonder if there might be—I don't know about the Greeks—was it considered an evil act to destroy not only the people but even the cattle, as happened here?

LS: No, I think the Old Testament is in one respect more strict—in the cutting down of fruit trees, for example.

Same Student: It wasn't cattle and animals that were destroyed? Well, you know it better than I do.[xxxvi]

LS: No, here the question is really of the killing, the butchering of human beings, and especially of non-fighters and especially of children, which is so shocking here. And Thucydides makes it very emphatic, that it is "as worthy of lament as anything that happened." And the most immediate term of comparison because of the context is the Athenian disaster in Sicily. And one could of course say that an army that voluntarily on its own power invades a country where it has no business, that cannot have as deep a claim on our compassion as such an event. But very

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[xxxv] Yet they also live in the midst of the greatest war. Does not blame attach to the city's magistrates for neglecting its defenses? Are they not Melian or worse than Melian in their hopefulness that evil will be averted from their city?

[xxxvi] It was not for killing the cattle of the proscribed Amalekites but for preserving them in contradiction to God's command that King Saul was reproved and deposed as king by God's judgment conveyed by the prophet Samuel (First Sanuel 15.1-35).

strangely, [no matter] how often one may read the second half of book 7, the more one is moved by it. In a way it is, if one can make such comparisons, more moving than the story of the Peloponnesus.[xxxvii] We have to take up this next time. It is very strange. Surely there is a connection between these two disasters. Well, everything seems to go wrong for the Athenians. In chapter 33, at the beginning.

Reader:
About the same time came unto them also the aid of the Camarinaeans, five hundred men of arms, three hundred darters, and three hundred archers. Also the Geloans sent them men for five galleys, besides four hundred darters and two hundred horse men. For now all Sicily, except the Agrigentines, who were neutral, but all the rest, who before stood looking on, came in to the Syracusian side against the Athenians.[xxxviii]

LS: Now here is a very little point: with the exception of the Agrigentines, all the rest of Sicily goes over to the Syracusians. But this is not quite correct. It is not quite correct. The Athenians still had some allies or helpers on Sicily. What kind of people were they? Nothing far-fetched. They were not Greeks. Thucydides treats here non-Greeks as non-beings. Now this is of course an old story, and we cannot succumb to the prejudice of the classical scholars and say that he didn't regard barbarians as human beings. But there is a precedent, a great precedent for that in the Archaeology. You know, for example, when he speaks about rule of the sea, command of the sea, you get the impression that only Greeks had even command of the sea, and only in passing does he refer to the Phoenicians and others. He is also silent in the Archaeology about urban barbarians. You have the impression that barbarians are only such people living like savages in northern Greece or the Balkan penninsula. That we must keep in mind, because this was of course already corrected in some cases, but it will be corrected more fully in the sequel. By the way, Agrigentum, which remains neutral, is Dorian,[xxxix] so the racial difference doesn't play a role here.

Then there is the indecisive naval battle between the Athenians and Corinthians near Naupactus. And there is a remark about the Athenians and Corinthians toward the end of chapter 34 which we should read, about the third sentence from the end.

Reader:
But when the Athenians were gone back to Naupactus, the Corinthians presently set up a trophy as victors, in regard that more of the Athenian galleys were made unserviceable than of theirs, and thought themselves not to have had the worse for the same reason that the others thought themselves not to have had the better. For the Corinthians think they have had the better when they have not much the worse, and the Athenians think they have the worse when they have not much better. (7.34)

LS: This is another succinct description of the difference between Athens and Corinth. The Athenians are of course full of the love of victory and have a certain generosity in spite of some unpleasantness. And the Corinthians are modest and full of tenacious hate. That is the description

[xxxvii] Strauss's reference is obscure. Did he mean to say the Sicilian expedition?
[xxxviii] Thucydides 7.33.1-2.
[xxxix] On the founding of Agrigentum (Greek Acragas), see Thucydides 6.4.4.

of these people there, and the choice is not difficult to make. He describes then the technical superiority of the Syracusians and Corinthians regarding the navy, in contrast to the Athenians. As I said before, the defeat of the Athenians is to some extent due to the victory of the Athenian principle. The words used here in chapter 36—no, there is a technical advancement used by the Corinthians in their speech in book 1, chapter 71.[xl] This would only confirm that. Oh yes, that is the point which I wanted to make. Here we see the Syracusians beginning to surpass the Athenians in naval warfare, in the art of the naval warfare. The superiority which Athens enjoyed hitherto is now in danger. Others learn from the Athenians.

Now let us look forward for one moment. Some time later another conquering nation appears, and they are the greatest learners of all, and they are the Romans. Polybius describes that somewhere, how they learned everything useful from every tribe or nation which they ever defeated. You know that they were originally the opposite of sailors and eventually they controlled the whole Mediterranean. The conclusion, the destruction of Athens, even of Greece, is not the end of *technē*, not the end of the specifically human. Perhaps, if we use our fantasy, perhaps the end of Greece is not even the end of love of the beautiful and love of wisdom. This thought is of course nowhere expressed by Thucydides. But it is also not contradicted anywhere by Thucydides. In other words, his treatment of the non-Greeks as non-beings, so to speak, has to be revised very radically.

We see here and there, for example in chapter 38, Nicias acting very reasonably as a general, but in details. In other words, he is a competent general, there is no question about that, but the question concerns entirely the overall situation. He still waits for reinforcements; he lives in hope. Then there is, in chapter 39—the initiative is entirely on the anti-Athenian side, and here on the side of the Corinthian commander, as the speaker has mentioned. The Athenians are now emphatically at rest. That especially shows in chapter 40, paragraph 2. And they are at rest at the first time where only motion could have saved them. The Athenians had sent Nicias, the representative of rest, as counterpart to Alcibiades, the representative of motion, and then they had taken away the counterpart. Athenian motion destroys itself and its opposite, that is the overall action—I mean, its opposite in Athens, Nicias. Spartan rest preserves itself and its opposite insofar as Sparta saves Athens from destruction at the end of the war. But we must also add, in all these cases we are concerned here with post-Periclean motion, when the perfect balance which Pericles had established no longer existed.

Now the Syracusians win a great naval battle in the harbor of Syracuse. At that moment the Athenian reinforcements under Demosthenes and Eurymedon arrive, and this is a shock to the Syracusians. In spite of Decelea, the Athenians could send such a force to Syracuse—what a people. Then the situation is described as it appeared to Demosthenes, and that is of course very important, in chapter 42.

Student: That is the end of today's assignment and the beginning of the next. We decided to break it off at that point, if that is all right.

LS: Sure, we have no jurisdictional conflicts. We will stop here.

[xl] There is no such statement. Is Strauss thinking of Thucydides's own statement at 1.13.2 crediting Corinth with the invention of the trireme?

Student: I have a question about your statement "go in sympathy,[xli] but when motion is taken away rest destroys itself as well as its counterpart." Alcibiades, unless he transcends himself, I don't think destroys himself.

LS: But Athens, the *polis* of Athens, sends Nicias and Alcibiades to Sicily because it knows without the element of rest it cannot survive. And then it takes away the element of motion there, where motion was needed more than ever, and in that way destroys itself. Let me state it differently, the general principle: Never undiluted motion or undiluted rest in human affairs, whatever may be true of cosmic principles. Even there you cannot have motion without something moved, without something which in itself is permanent in one way or the other. But here surely Athens must have some stability, otherwise it could never engage in that. There must always be a guarantee for the presence of rest, and in this particular situation for very specific reasons which we have discussed.

Same Student: Could you elaborate your point on post-Periclean motion?

LS: Well, in Pericles there was this harmony. There it worked. But again, it is interesting: What was the soundness of the Periclean solution? This depended on a single man, and the moment he died this equilibrium was destroyed. And that is not a good policy if the failure of the *polis* depends on the life of a single man. You must have a policy in which there is a ruling stratum which supplies always for those who eventually will succeed. And that means, of course, high-class mediocrity, not genius. But what institutions can provide for is never genius, but instead high-class mediocrity. The question is high-class or low-class mediocrity, and then I think we always vote for high-class mediocrity.

Same Student: I am wondering at the satisfactoriness of leaving it at rest and motion. Doesn't he seem to say that in fact in both the case of Athens and [that of] Sparta, there is something which does create that harmony, and hence that harmony is, as it were, above the two? And that something is somehow practical judgment, what you mentioned by genius?

LS: Genius is not merely practical judgement—*gnōmē* for Thucydides, that means intelligence. That you have of course also on the level of high-class mediocrity.

Same Student: Yes, I was thinking of his praise of Themistocles—

LS: But in Themistocles it goes much beyond that—this man who had never learned anything before or after, and could do these things because he had such a gift, such a nature. But what do you mean by this undoubtedly true statement that motion and rest is not enough? Because surely it is not enough, because the study of motion and rest would also come in in the study of an earthquake, for example. So this is too general to be sufficient, but that does not mean that it must not be considered as an ingredient of human things as well. For example, let us take Athens and Sparta. They correspond somehow to motion and rest, but they are not exhausted by it. And the fact that motion and rest is not sufficient for an analysis for political things—I mean, you would make the same mistake as some contemporaries—is shown by Corinth. Corinth is neither

[xli] There would appear to be a transcription error here.

Sparta nor Athens. In all cases you have a mixture of motion and rest, but a clear predominance of rest in Sparta and a clear predominance of motion in Athens, and Corinth is somewhere in between. It is also naval and, you know, the understanding they show for the Athenian danger in their speech in book 1 shows that they are closer to Athens. But they are not so interesting, because they do not embody the principle, either of the two principles, as clearly as Sparta and Athens do. And also the additional reason, not altogether negligible in a political history, that each [of] Sparta and Athens was a greater power than Corinth was.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but what would you say to that? [LS goes to the blackboard] [. . .]

Motion: Athens
Rest: Sparta

Same Student: In this case, speech would seem to fit with Athens, and deeds would seem to fit with Sparta, but I don't think that is the case. For example, this is outside the paper, I can't help but think of the *Republic*—

LS: But if you take speeches and deeds by themselves, without other considerations, how would it be—where would speech belong?

Same Student: Well, the speech—we think before we act—

LS: [Pointing to the blackboard] Where would speech belong?

Same Student: With rest.

LS: Yes, I think so.

Same Student: Deliberation, you could say. And then deeds with motion.

LS: With action, and with the sea. I mean, we must not underestimate also the irony of this general schema.

Same Student: Why?

LS: Because they are not sufficient, they are not specific enough. But they are nonetheless by no means meaningless.

Same Student: I wondered if you couldn't get Corinth into this schema—something which isn't present—I mean, quality.

LS: What does "quality" mean?

Same Student: If you look, the leader of the battle's name is Ariston,[xlii] and if you look at the proceedings in Corinth . . .

LS: Yes, but that does come out—then we ride this horse to death. That is of no help in the matter. But I think it is perfectly sufficient to say that Corinth is somewhere in between Athens and Sparta. It was oligarchically ruled, had a navy, and this is sufficient for our purposes. And then she has of course this special principle, as we have seen in book 1; what I called the hen, the hen morality—the chickens always remain with her.

Student: I have an inquiry to make which impinges upon the next assignment by about one sentence, chapter 42, at the very end of the first sentence it says, "all other provision sufficient." What is the word for sufficient there?

LS: [*Paraskeuēn*]—the most literal translation in English, "preparation," you could almost say.[xliii]

Same Student: Well, is that the same as the first one in chapter 28 of the same book?

LS: No, the bringing over of the necessities—

Student: Parenthetically, I don't know quite what to do with this, but if Athens embodies one principle and Sparta the other, and Corinth is in the middle, why isn't Corinth the best?

LS: That is a very good question.

Same Student: The suggestion was made that Thucydides has a sort of commitment to motion. I think his commitment is to quality, the fact of achievement, and he realizes its fragility.

LS: In other words, whichever is best administered is best?

Same Student: No, that any sort of achievement, any sort of fineness, of beauty, etc., rests on—I can see the thesis in this is the sense of the need to dare and dare again, the need for daring and motion, and its fragility. You know, the fact that if you become excellent, you are exposed. You brought in this fact of the jealousy of the gods. The qualities of Sparta have nothing to recommend them—as merely safe in consequence.

LS: I think that is not fair enough. Especially in the seventh book, I think, Sparta, although she has this great success in Sicily and of course also in Decelea, somehow fails in the face of the Athenian disaster. I will try to develop that next time. Athens shines, somehow, in her tragedy. There is no Spartan tragedy; Sparta is comical. I mean, I cannot possibly go further in your direction than by saying that, and I believe that Thucydides in a way means that. But while that is true, it does not necessarily mean that it is said in disregard of the great political virtues of the

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[xlii] Thucydides 7.39.2.

[xliii] Confusing, because the student inquires about the Greek original of the adjective "sufficient," while Strauss replies with the Greek original for the noun "preparation." The correct answer to the student's query is *hikanēn.*

Spartan system. In other words, must not Thucydides have already transcended the whole political sphere if he could think of Athens and Sparta in these terms? Do you see what I mean? You see, you imply something, and the previous student also, which is legitimate but which must be made very explicit. Let me state that. After all, we have here primarily what we call an historian, and surely a man passionately concerned with such things as wars and cities. I mean, what we are in the habit of calling, as it has been called for some millennia, political things. Now the point of view which you introduced, and which I think the other student also implied, is not merely political. Do you see that? I mean, a *polis* is not, as *polis*—it is not the essence of a *polis* to be concerned with love of beauty and love of wisdom, in the sense we use it now . . . and quite a few other things. And it is a very high point from which looking down a man could say this smoothly working, but somewhat clumsy and cumbersome—of course, Sparta is in some respects the model of the *polis*. Is there a modern example of that, a community which is politically unblameable and yet can be regarded as comical?

Student: Switzerland.

LS: I didn't dare to say it. Thank you. Yes, there is something ridiculous about such perfect order, which is very enjoyable but which in spite of all we would not pick . . . But there is something ridiculous about it, that is true. But that is the transpolitical position, you see. And that is the point which—well, that this transpolitical consideration has to come out somehow is clear if we have no other evidence than the story of Mycalessus. I mean, who cares for that from the point of view of the Peloponnesian War? I mean, a few hundred more people were killed, but there were many thousands killed. And it had no influence whatsoever on the war. Thucydides pauses and says: Look at that, look at that, that is as important as the most impressive naval battles. That is surely not the statement of a man who looks at things from a merely political point of view. But I must also add, lest I seem to give you too easy a victory, this comedy is also on Athens—at the most unexpected place, at first glance, I believe in the funeral speech of Pericles. It is a much more subtle comedy, but it is also from Thucydides's point of view comedy. And I think we will find some evidence for that next time. Well, let us stay somewhat closer to the discussion of today.

Student: I'd like to bring up once again the point which was raised about Corinth as a mean between Athens and Sparta, and therefore between motion and rest. The point I think that's trying to be clarified is what is that character of that harmony in Athens which makes it—

LS: Oh, I forgot that; that point has not been faced. But what could you say? Formally, or superficially rather, one could say Corinth could be great. Thucydides makes this statement in the eighth book about the best polity the Athenians had in his lifetime, and that was the mixture of oligarchy and democracy. It is a mixture. But what about Sparta, is Sparta a mixture of oligarchy and democracy?

Same Student: Sparta is really a tyranny.

LS: This is what everyone says. They hold the assembly of the old, the *gerousia*, is aristocratic, and the ephors are a democratic institution. What about Corinth? I know nothing about it except that it is never mentioned in classical times when they speak about a mixed regime, so I conclude

it was a bland oligarchy and nothing else. And so it is not a middle; from this point of view it is an extreme. And in addition I think it is quite clear that Thucydides does not consider it as a serious competitor with either Athens or Sparta, as far as fundamental issues go. It would not be a mean. I think one can say that Thucydides had a great sympathy for the friends of Athens in Sparta and for the friends of Sparta in Athens. That one can say: moderation. But he[6] [sees] also much deeper. For instance, Archidamus was such a man in Sparta and Nicias was such a man in Athens. But he saw much deeper than these people, he saw that what they were trying to do was to prevent the onrush of the ocean by—how does Hume put it? By putting a broom in the dike. In other words, they had no notion against what they were up. It was a mere wish. And therefore I think it ultimately remains at opposition. What Athens meant at its highest, which is I think in Thucydides's opinion transpolitical, would not have been possible in a well-regulated *polis*. Alcibiades and similar supercrooks were the price which had to be paid for Sophocles and Thucydides and Socrates. Is this intelligible to you? In other words, the daring, the daring, the soaring which is politically very dangerous and probably disastrous, is not disastrous in another element. And I think Thucydides has stated this as neatly as possible by contrasting, or at least making us contrast, Pericles's remark about the Athenians: "We have left [*mnēmeia*]"—what is that? "Memorials of evil and good things everywhere." No, "We have left everywhere sempiternal memorials of evil and good things."[xliv] And his book is a sempiternal possession which is useful, i.e., good. But both were possible only by this amazing daring and questioning, but on two different levels. In other words, what you would wish to have is a *polis* like Sparta and an intellectual life of Athens, and that you don't get.

Same Student: Yes, but the point is I think Thucydides's commitment to Alcibiades . . . and Alcibiades makes his entrance into the *Symposium* the moment when beauty incarnate has been invoked . . . there was fragility, there was terror—

LS: I did not understand the word before terror, the other noun.

Same Student: Fragility. This actively appears in the whole culture to a certain extent, that a person who is too beautiful will awaken the envy of the gods, and people will actually hide beautiful children.

LS: Now you confuse me completely, because Socrates was said to be the opposite of a beautiful—

Same Student: But Socrates had the beauty of spirit, but the incarnation of beauty—

LS: That is a long question. I can only assert very dogmatically and in a merely esoteric form that the meaning of Alcibiades's speech at the end of the *Symposium* is that he divines the unusual paradox of Socrates, and he in a way loves him, but hasn't understood a thing. He is drunk not only now, but always. And you must be sober. I mean, if Socrates is drunk, it is this sober drunkenness, or a drunken sobriety, whereas Alcibiades is simply drunk. Ambition, ambition, the love of victory. No, but one could say that what Plato and Aristotle tried to show in their description of the best regime is [that it is] as *eukosmos*, is as well ordered, and even better ordered than Sparta, and having an intellectual life as high and perhaps even higher than Athens.

[xliv] Thucydides 2.41,4.

And the only thing which they seriously assert is that it is in principle possible: there is no essential contradiction between political order and intellectual freedom—not in our sense now for all, but intellectual freedom for those who can make a good use of it. However, there are also great difficulties as we know very well. But[7] Thucydides's descriptions of course are "infinitely more realistic" because here you see the complete split that's between the two things. He is even more complicated because even on the political plane, disregarding entirely the transpolitical, Athens makes a very good show in many ways.

Same Student: [. . .] Even if the Athenians were being stupid, they were making their own decisions. The standard of judgment—

LS: Whether that is so certain as you believe, that to be a fool, it is better to be a fool under your own power and not a fool under someone else's power, I think the ancients felt differently about that than we do.

Same Student: Didn't the Greeks have this great commitment to freedom? Well, doesn't one find this in Thucydides, that the only thing which makes the Greeks significant is that they are each free, they are within their *polis*, they are citizens—

LS: That the citizen body, i.e., the city, should determine its fate, true. But how ordered? One man, one vote, or what? That is the question.

Same Student: Their commitment, of course, was to the government of the many, the consent given by the many to the government of the excellent few—

LS: I see. That is no longer the simple freedom, because this is rigged, in a way, if I may use this vulgar term—you know, because they [are] of course influenced in their vote by what they get. So you get this element of deference which is by no means democratic, a classical democratic view. And don't forget this: In the presentation of democracy as it claims to be in Plato's *Republic*, book eight, what does the democrat say? He doesn't say freedom for all men, or fundamental human rights which necessarily become political rights.[xlv] You must remember, a man may admit rights of man and deny equal rights of man, and deny that they lead to equal political rights. Burke is a good modern example of that. But here there is no question of equal rights for all men but equal rights for men who are by nature free men.

I am wholly disregarding the actual institution of slavery, wholly disregarding it. Here in this theoretical statement the only men who have the right to claim freedom are men who are by nature free men. That is of course a severe limitation. That has also been said; in all textbooks you find that it is preposterous to call the Greek cities, even Athens, a democracy given the fact that a relatively small part of the *polis* had any citizen rights. I mean, even if there were thirty to forty percent, that is of course still a small part.

For the notion of freedom, an account always very revealing is the remark occurring somewhere in the *Anabasis* of Xenophon that we bow, the Greeks bow only to gods, not to human beings.

[xlv] It is unclear to what passage of the *Republic* Strauss means to refer to here.

That is . . . for the Greek notion of freedom.[xlvi] You know, for the overall popular notion as distinguished from anything which men like Plato and Aristotle make out of that.

A word again about this schema. I think it is absolutely necessary to take this seriously, because Thucydides draws our attention to it so clearly from this very first page of the book, and of course he does not mean that this offers a complete explanation. What happens precisely is to understand the mixtures, or the kind of mixtures—we discussed, for example, that the sea power is a power which has its root on the element of right . . . even if it is an island, but simply land and then tries to control—[xlvii]

[xlvi] Xenophon *Anabasis of Cyrus* 3,2,13; cf. Herodotus *History* 7.136.
[xlvii] This concluding sentence is unfortunately completely unintelligible.

Session 15: no date
Book 7, chapters 42-87

Leo Strauss: [i]Now the Syracusians win a great naval battle in the harbor of Syracuse. [. . .] and this gives a shock to the Syracusians—the power of Athens.[ii] In spite of Decelea, the Athenians dare to send such a force to Syracuse. Now the first important thing, Demosthenes's view of the situation after his arrival there, is in chapter 42. We cannot possibly read the whole chapter but, say, after the first two or three sentences where he begins to mention Demosthenes.

Reader:
Demosthenes, when he saw how things stood, and thinking it unfit to loiter and fall into Nicias' case—for Nicias, who was formidable at his first coming, when he set not presently upon Syracuse but wintered at Catana, both grew into contempt and was prevented also by the coming of Gylippus thither with an army out of Peloponnesus; the which, if Nicias had gone against Syracuse at first, had never been so much as sent for; for supposing themselves to have been strong enough alone, they had at once both found themselves too weak and the city been enclosed with a wall; whereby, though they had sent for it, it could not have helped them as it did—Demosthenes, I say, considering this, and that he also even at the present and the same day was most terrible to the enemy, intended with all speed to make use of this present terribleness of the army.

LS: Now let us stop here. Now this is Demosthenes's view of the situation, i.e., of Nicias, [. . .] Thucydides's own view. The report in a way . . . as could be shown by the narrative in book 6, but it is a perfectly legitimate exaggeration in order to bring out the main point: All "activity" of Nicias after the arrival [. . .] was staying in winter quarters in Catana. So in fact the Athenians had a victory over the Syracusians, but then they return to Catana. The Syracusians' decision to send for help, stated in chapter 73 of this book, was much later. Fundamentally Demosthenes was absolutely right. Now let us go on where we left off.

Reader:
And having observed that the cross wall of the Syracusians, wherewith they hindered the Athenians from enclosing the city, was but single, and that if they could be masters of the ascent to Epipolae and again of the camp there, the same might easily be taken (for none would have stood against them), hasted to put it to trial, and thought it his shortest way to the dispatching of the war. For either he should have success, he thought, and so win Syracuse, or he would lead away the army and no longer without purpose consume both the Athenians there with him and the whole state.[iii]

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[i] The transcriber notes: "The first quarter of this tape is largely inaudible. The transcript begins after the questioning of the speaker."
[ii] Here Strauss must be commenting on the unexpected arrival of the Athenian relief force hard on the heels of the Syracusians' initial naval victory over the previous Athenian force.
[iii] Thucydides 7.42-43.

LS: One can only say a fresh breeze . . . a clear alternative. One last try, by all means, but if this fails . . . return immediately.

Now the first action of Demosthenes failed . . . after initial splendid success, also fails completely because the Athenians take too great risks. But they have had to take such risks: it is not levity or frivolity, it is a last defense. The battle is the only night battle in this war. And one factor contributing much to the magnitude of the disaster is the singing of the paean, to which our speaker referred and which is described in chapter 44. Now a paean is an epithet[1] especially to Apollo . . . and becomes then a derivative choral song and particularly a battle song.

Now the main point is that the Athenians do not clearly recognize in the darkness whether certain soldiers are friends or enemies, because there are Dorian and Ionian dialects fighting on their side as well as on the enemy's side. The unnatural alliance of Dorians and Ionians would seem to take its revenge. Now after this battle the situation of the Athenians is of course worse than it was before the arrival of the reinforcements. Naturally, because the Syracusians have shown that they can take care of this situation too.

Now . . . of the generals takes place. Demosthenes states his view very clearly. I think we will read only the last half of this chapter 47.

Reader:
Demosthenes thought fit to stay no longer, and since the execution of his design at Epipolae had failed, delivered his opinion for going out of the haven whilst the seas were open and whilst—[iv]

LS: And not to waste time, that is the key point. But Nicias says, and this is the point which was not sufficiently brought out by you,[v] he would not act without a formal decision of the army. He would not do that. And this formal decision would of course become known to the enemy. That has to do with his cowardice, he does not want to take the responsibility. In addition, his fundamental slowness: he says we might at some time withdraw, as if there were time. And some hope that things might improve . . . he still continues this quasi-siege—in Greek, [*proskathēmenoi*], which means sitting, sitting, rest, the leisure element. And the ground of hope is the Syracusians' financial difficulties. Well, the wealthy Nicias thinks of money, naturally. And how absurd that in such a situation with victory around the corner any state would have stopped the war. And the democratic party in Syracuse (the point which was stressed by the speaker), again the question is: How strong can the opposition be in such a situation, the domestic opposition? And yet Nicias remains undecided and still considers what to do. He is truly undecided, but explicitly he refuses to lead away the army out of fear of the Athenians, of the orators there. We should read that in chapter 48, the second half of that chapter.

Reader:

[iv] Thucydides 7.47.

[v] Strauss presumably addresses the student whose paper was read at the beginning of the session.

That many, nay most of the soldiers here, who now cry out upon their misery, will there cry out on the contrary—

LS: You see the old story.

Reader:
and say the generals have betrayed the state and come away for a bribe. That he would not, therefore, knowing the nature of the Athenians so well, choose to be put to death unjustly and charged with a dishonourable crime by the Athenians rather than, if he must needs do one, to suffer the same at the hand of the enemy by his own adventure.[vi]

LS: This is impossible to translate, but surely incorrect. What is the alternative? He prefers, rather than to die at the hands of the city—in Greek the word does not occur, here it would be *dēmesia*—he would prefer to die [*apolesthai*] by his own. He doesn't mean suicide, of course, but it is somewhat illogical but very revealing of the whole man. Out of fear of the Athenians, of the orators there, rather than die an ignominious death in Athens he prefers to die in battle "privately," meaning on his own account, not put to death by the city but put to death by himself, and therefore no ignominy would attach to that. This is extremely important. Let us read also the end of chapter 47, what Demosthenes said.

Reader:
For it was better, he said, for the city to make war upon those which fortify against them at home than against the Syracusians, seeing they cannot now be easily overcome; and there was no reason why they should spend much money in lying before the city. This was the opinion of Demosthenes.[vii]

LS: Demosthenes thinks of the *polis*; Nicias does not think of the *polis*. The just Nicias is reduced to the condition where he cannot any longer be sincere, but where he must sacrifice the *polis* to his own selfish interest. And that means that he must act like Alcibiades, and for the same reason. Alcibiades too let down Athens because he was in mortal danger at the hands of the Athenian *demos*. The same reason, to quote Alcibiades himself, "the admitted unreasonableness of the Athenian *demos*." This, by the way, is absolutely crucial for the understanding of book 2, chapter 65, the central passage about the difference between Periclean and post-Periclean Athens. Under Pericles the admitted irrationality of the *demos* was controlled—controlled by Pericles, not after. The truly just man is Demosthenes. I mean, he perishes, as we shall see soon, but he does not think of himself. He thought of himself when it was proper to think of himself—you know, when he lost that battle in western Greece and didn't go home because he was sure that he would be shot, to use a convenient modern expression. But he waited until he had won a victory, and then of course he could go home.

Student: Isn't Alcibiades in the same position? [. . .] unjustly treated.

[vi] Thucydides 7.48.
[vii] Thucydides 7.47.

LS: Who?

Same Student: Alcibiades.

LS: Yes, I said that. But I said that for this reason, because Alcibiades appeared as the incarnation of injustice. You must not be falsely sophisticated, then one cannot understand what you mean. You must take the children's story seriously. And the proof of it is this. Who is praised? Who receives the eulogy? Nicias. In other words, Thucydides regarded [it] as important enough to give the weight of his name to the simple-minded view of the situation, and therefore we are under an obligation to imitate him because we cannot transcend that simple-minded view except[2] [by going] way beyond it step by step in full clarity about what we are doing. And from this point of view we feel that Alcibiades is a sinister figure. Nicias is the opposite of sinister. I mean, he is as likeable as the well-known and fortunately much more fortunate American general—I mean of course President Eisenhower. He is truly a likeable man, but when you apply the highest standards, which ultimately must be done, surely by Thucydides but vicariously also by us, then things look different. And here we see, but we don't see it enough.

Student: Isn't there another point there too about the fact that the people who had [. . .]

LS: No. I'm sure Demosthenes would have been perfectly willing to sacrifice a good part of his fortune to come home safely to Athens, if you want to put it on the lowest ground. And he must be a very great fool who is willing to be tortured to death rather than to lose a few thousand dollars. There are such people, but surely not Demosthenes. Now the point which is made here also in the same speech by Nicias: Money is the nerve of war. I advise you to read Machiavelli's *Discourses*, book 2, chapter 10, on this subject. You know that Machiavelli is always concerned with the dangerous easy way out which we all seek in various ways, and one of them is money. In other words, not to rely on the power, decisions, energy of men, but on something else, and Nicias is of course a beautiful representative of that. Nicias believes in money, apart from his other beliefs. Now there is a connection between the belief in money and his belief in the gods—I mean, from a very broad point of view? What is money?

Student: It is a sign of the approval of the gods.

LS: Yes, perhaps. But more strictly.

Student: Money is external help, the means. I was thinking that in a way it is similar to the gods because it is relying not on yourself, but on something external—

LS: That is really too general.

Same Student: If you have a lot of money, you can offer more sacrifices to the gods.

LS: Yes, that was meant by him who spoke first, I think. He didn't say it as clearly as you did, but I got it.

Same Student: There seems to be an idea that the successful people are the ones who favored by the gods.

LS: That is the same thing. In other words, wealth is blessing. But I meant something more.

Student: Has anyone mentioned that both money and gods are held invaluable, not necessarily valuable in themselves?

LS: That is what I am driving at. Money, Aristotle, *Politics*, book 1: conventional wealth. You can starve if you have millions of gold coins, but you cannot starve if you have natural wealth. Even potatoes are natural wealth compared with gold.[viii] So the element of *nomos* is concerned [. . .] by human hands, by human authority. And later on it will be said in his eulogy that his virtue, Nicias's virtue, is [*nenomismenēn*], is somehow derivative from *nomos*,[ix] whereas Demosthenes is the man to whom the word nature is attributed in the key passage shortly before the story of Pylos.

Surely Nicias's belief or hope is grounded in the fear of the Athenian *demos*, this fear inducing to hope. Otherwise of course he would have given in to despair a long time ago. Nicias vetoes Demosthenes's plan. Demosthenes is then in the same position in which he was at Pylos, you remember, when he had no power. He was a private soldier at that time; he could not command, he had to talk individual soldiers into making that fortress. He is again powerless. Demosthenes, in all his great qualities, is not a man of such natural authority which asserts itself without any public authority. That, it seems to me, is the most important lesson of Aristophanes's presentation of Demosthenes in the *Knights*, that a very poor, utterly despicable sausage seller, utterly despicable, from the gutter, and who is picked by the knights as a demagogue against Cleon—by the way, it is extremely essential, according to some interpretations of what fascism is, the men of the upper class pick one of the gutter to save them. Mussolini and Hitler are twentieth-century examples of that. I don't say this interpretation is necessarily correct, but what Aristophanes does reminds me of it. And now this creature, an object of utter contempt, proves to be not only excellent at beating down by speech as well as by deed, so to speak, Cleon, but he proves to be a most excellent man, a natural ruler whose natural rulership shows itself in the fact that he did not aspire to rule. He was perfectly willing to spend the rest of his life as a despised hamburger—by the way, one can speak of hamburger with perfect legitimacy because at the end, when Cleon is sent out to be sausage seller, Aristophanes gives a chemical analysis of what one can only call a hamburger. He says, "He shall sell outside of the gates of Athens doggish and donkeyish things." He does not even say meat, mind you. I say this in conclusion—you see the eternal verities of human nature.

Now the Spartan army arrives via Africa. Let us read the end of chapter 50 for that.

[viii] Aristotle *Politics* 1256b28-1258a20.
[ix] Thucydides 7.86.

Student: May I ask a question? Do you remember when we talked about the "such" and "so many things." I noticed this, but I didn't say anything about it.

LS: After the speeches, you mean. Well, generally speaking, the general rule is this: At the end of a formal speech Thucydides says: "This man said such like things," which means it is not verbatim. At the end of very brief speeches, especially addresses to armies, he says, "so many" indicating "so brief." But there are some deviations from that.

Same Student: In this book here, every time Nicias speaks, and even in this part here where it is not really a speech by him in 48—he says . . .

LS: "So many"; in other words, it has begun to have a derogatory meaning, "so many things," and in fact there is nothing to say.

Same Student: But when he speaks to the soldiers as they retreat he said "so much."

LS: It must be interpreted in each case, I would say, after having made clear that there is a general rule, which I stated, that allows one to interpret properly the deviations. Now this remark in chapter 50, after the first half.

Reader:
The Athenian generals, seeing them have another army, and their own not bettering but every day growing worse than other, but especially as being pressed to it by the sickness of the soldiers, repented now that they removed not before; and Nicias, being now no longer against it as he was, but desirous only that it might not be concluded openly, gave order unto all as secretly as was possible to put forth of the harbour and to be ready when the sign should be given. But when they were about it and everything was ready, the moon happened to be eclipsed; for it was full moon.

LS: This is important, for Thucydides knows the natural reason why it could have happened. That has come up before, by the way.[x]

Reader:
And not only the greatest part of the Athenians called upon the generals to stay, but Nicias also, (for he was addicted to superstition and observations of that kind somewhat too much)—

LS: This word, [*theiasmōi*], is explained by an ancient commentator [as] "to prayer and soothsaying."

Reader:
said that it should come no more into debate whether they should go or not till the three times nine days were past which the soothsayers appoint in that behalf. And the Athenians, though upon going, stayed still for this reason.[xi]

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[x] Thucydides 3.89.4-5.
[xi] Thucydides 7.50.

LS: So Nicias's exaggerated piety, to use a [. . .] expression, puts the seal on the disaster. Now then there comes another defeat of the Athenians very wonderfully described in the sequel. And we will read only chapter 55.

Reader:
When the Syracusians had now manifestly overcome their fleet (for they feared at first the supply of galleys that came with Demosthenes), the Athenians were in good earnest utterly out of heart. And as they were much deceived in the event, so they repented more of the voyage. For having come against these cities, the only ones that were for institution like unto their own—

LS: "For institution" means more than institutions—"similar characters," let's say; "similar characters," meaning also daring and the other things.

Reader:
and governed by the people as well as themselves, and which had a navy and horses and greatness, seeing they could create no dissension amongst them about change of government to win them that way, nor could subdue it with the greatness of their forces when they were far the stronger, but misprospered in most of their designs, they were then at their wits' end—[xii]

LS: The Sicilian cities were similar in their *tropoi*, in their characters, to the Athenians, not old-fashioned like Sparta. Not like the old hen Corinth. And they were democracies. Does this mean that democratic cities are stronger than nondemocratic ones because everyone has a stake in it, or does it merely mean that the democratic aggressor can in principle count on democratic sympathies in oligarchically-ruled cities? That is not clear from that. But surely from the Athenian point of view democracy is a source of strength.

Now here the Athenians are out of heart and the Syracusians naturally in the opposite mood—which is described in the next chapter, unfortunately we cannot read that. The Syracusians are now like the Athenians were before. The Athenianism, you can say, has migrated from Athens to Syracuse. Now here then follows immediately the listing of the allies, first of the Athenians and shortly afterwards of the Syracusians. We cannot read that, unfortunately, the chapter is too long. I will give you only the main points. Let us read only the first sentence.

Reader:
And this number on both sides, against Sicily and for it, some to help win and some to help save it, came to the war at Syracuse, not on any pretence of right—[xiii]

LS: That "pretence" is Hobbes's addition: "not according to right, in any sense."

Reader:

[xii] Thucydides 7.55.
[xiii] Thucydides 7.57.

nor as kindred to aid kindred, but as profit or necessity severally chanced to induce them.

LS: Profit and necessity, no consideration of justice, determined the alignment in the Sicilian war. And then he describes the details. The Athenians came voluntarily, not by necessity, that is clear; hence we must say for profit, because that was the only alternative given. Thucydides makes clear what we suspected all along, that he disagrees with the Athenian speech in Sparta. To wage such wars is not according to any right, save the right of the stronger. The difference is either by right or by necessity or profit. If you go by necessity, that is not a consideration [of] right. Thucydides disagrees with the Athenians speaking about the *right* of the stronger. That is important. And that compares, by the way, beautifully with what we saw in the beginning of the first two speeches in the book: the Corcyraean speech beginning with the word just; the Corinthian speech beginning with the word necessary. Just and necessary are two radically different considerations, which does not mean that necessity may not be attenuating circumstances, that is another matter. But right and necessity are two different considerations. He describes in the sequel the case of the Ionians, where the compulsion, the necessity, was mitigated by the fact of kinship. In the case of the Ionian Plataeans, that they should fight the rest of the Ionian Boeotians,[xiv] there was no necessity but hatred. That is a new motive. Hatred is also something voluntary, not compulsory.

Now let us make this clear, the essential point. [LS draws on the blackboard] [. . .] So you have two motives, necessity and profit. This is involuntary—you are compelled. That is voluntary. But now the voluntary is enlarged; hatred is also voluntary. And no case of the opposite of hatred—love or friendship, except one. And that is the case which our speaker mentioned, Demosthenes. Some Acarnanians, if I remember well, followed Demosthenes out of friendship. Do you have the passage?

Reader:
And some Arcarnanians also went with them for gain; but most of them went as confederates, in love to Demosthenes and for good will to the state of Athens.[xv]

LS: So love—in Greek, friendship, not *eros*; the only man beloved is Demosthenes. No one came for love of Nicias nor of Alcibiades. We have other cases—Demosthenes the just man, you remember, in the properly defined sense—Demosthenes in opposition to Nicias and Alcibiades thinks of the *polis*, and here again he is singled out.

The next chapter on the allies of the Syracusians is very summary and very uninteresting. The whole listing has only one purpose ultimately—to bring out the unusual position of Demosthenes.

Student: When Alcibiades was appointed commander and there was some question about recalling him, Thucydides commented that some of the Greeks—

[xiv] Either Strauss misspeaks or the transcriber has misheard him: the Boeotians (including the Plataeans) were not Ionian but Aeolian Greeks (i.e., speakers of the Aeolian dialect).
[xv] Thucydides 7.57.10.

LS: The Argives—

Same Student: had joined out of friendship for Alcibiades.

LS: The word friendship does not occur, I think. Now let us see. Was it the sixth book?

Same Student: I don't recall.

LS: I know, because after all Alcibiades was the link between Athens and Argos. But let us see, where is this? Do you remember that? Where is the chapter on the *hermai*?

Same Student: Chapter 27, it starts.

LS: In chapter 29, "And his enemies were fearful that the army would be benevolent to Alcibiades," [*eunoun*] not *philia*. That is something very different from [*philia*]. Because you can be benevolent to a man without having affection for him. Now let me first see that to make it quite sure. The Argives and some Mantineans went on the campaign for Alcibiades's sake. There is nothing of *philia*. Just let me see here. Yes, there is nothing.

Same Student: Well, at the point where Thucydides says the Athenians loved Alcibiades and feared him and couldn't do without him—[xvi]

LS: Yes, that is also a different story. There is also a story of a Corinthian in the first book—I forgot his name—who went up to northern Greece and some Corinthians followed him out of friendship, *philia*, the same word. But these were fellow Corinthians; that is a different case.[xvii]

Same Student: Do you remember the words Thucydides uses in the relationship between the Athenians and Alicbiades when he says they loved him—

LS: I don't remember, but I am almost sure it is not *philia*. I looked up all the passages of which I could think to make this sure. I think it is the unique case. Benevolence is of course not the same *eunoia* as *erōs.* You can have benevolence for someone to whom you are not attracted at all. But *philia* is not the same as *eros*, but *philia* rarely is a passion in the Greek sense of *pathos* [or] an affection. Demosthenes arouses this affection. To say amiable would be bad, because of the low meaning in general it has. Lovable would be much better. He must have been a lovable man. That was my impression all the time, but I simply didn't see that I would get it straight from the horse's mouth, if I may use this droll expression.

Demosthenes occupies a unique position, and Demosthenes does not receive a eulogy like Brasidas, for example. Brasidas at first glance would also seem to be such an attractive human being. But that I think is not quite Thucydides's view. And when he

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[xvi] Thucydides never says this.

[xvii] Strauss refers to Corinthian volunteers to succor Poteidaea who were motivated by affection (*philia*) for their leader Aristeus (Thucydides 1.60.2).

makes later on the remark, at the last mention of Brasidas after his death, when he gives the motives of the four men shortly before the peace of Nicias—remember, Nicias and Pleistonanx and Cleon and Brasidas—and then he speaks in a somewhat derogatory manner of his ambition.[xviii] No such thing occurs in the case of Demosthenes. There is a tradition which may be true, that Demosthenes was a relative of Thucydides,[xix] but no one surely could think that Thucydides could so easily be bribed that he would for mere kinship—how should I say it?—take away the justice and reliability of his book.

Student: There is a thing here about the Acarnanians which just struck my mind as we were looking at it now: It was the Acarnanians who had this feeling for Demosthenes and also they had good will towards Athens as well as being their allies. But there is another case in the beginning of book 3 where they show a rather similar thing, where it was the same Acarnanians who had insisted that the Athenian commander should be some son or relative of Phormio.[xx] They seem to have regarded Phormio in the same way they regard Demosthenes.

LS: But still, I think there is a difference—and by the way, I am grateful to you that you draw attention to the fact that Thucydides here distinguishes between benevolence and friendship [. . .] I think Thucydides may have done one thing, that he may have underlined the fact that there was friendship for Demosthenes in order to bring out here the contrast of the three leading men of the Sicilian expedition: Demosthenes, Nicias, and Alcibiades.

Same Student: [. . .] It seems to me that Phormio in many ways vanishes down a crack in history rather surprisingly, but shows many of the same admirable qualities as Demosthenes.

LS: That makes absolute sense. But you see that Thucydides had also to get, if I may say so, the most of these fantastic opportunities offered by the Sicilian disaster to bring out his views of man. I mean, Thucydides cannot be read like a present-day scientific historian, because he wants to show in the individual and particular and accidental, the universal. Popularly stated, he is truly an artist and a historian, and his being an artist cannot be reduced to his being an historian of the first rank as Gomme in an otherwise very well stated argument tried to show.

Now let us proceed. In chapter 59, the second sentence:

Reader:
No marvel then if the Syracusians thought it a noble mastery if to the victory by sea already gotten they could add the taking of the whole Athenian army, so great as it was, and hinder their escape both by sea and land.

[xviii] Thucydides 5.16.1.
[xix] To my frustration I have been able to find no substantiation of this repeated claim of Strauss's.
[xx] Thucydides 3.7.1.

LS: In other words, the Sicilian victory will be even greater than that of the Athenians in the Persian War. There follows Nicias's speech, and he pretends that their situation is equal to that of the enemy, which is of course a pitiful pretence. He hopes on chance, rather than on number or anything else. Our skill or knowledge will be useless here. He speaks of certain naval inventions, but which are belated. The last desperate hope is that there will be a land battle, an infantry battle, from the ships—a complete reversal, a complete reversal of the Athenian situation. And yet at the end of chapter 63 he appeals to[3] [their] superior skill or knowledge, of which he has said before that it is useless in this situation.

The speech is most pitiable and in a way disgusting. The question which I would suggest at this point—the narrative of the Sicilian disaster is the most moving in the book. It stands comparison with any other narrative of any other disaster, because we must go beyond 1812 and 1944—you know, the Russian things—we must take into consideration fiction. But this compares with any fiction. Doesn't the feeling that the Athenians were somehow betrayed into the disaster by Nicias enter into that feeling? On the basis of this speech by Nicias I could not help having that feeling.

Now there follows the speeches of the Syracusian generals and Gylippus. They stress the greatness of their victory. The Athenians have the greatest empire ever held by any Greeks. In other words, there is this peak, the acme, of which Thucydides himself had spoken at the beginning of the book. And this empire was based on naval power, and you are the first to defeat them in a naval battle. The Athenians who boasted of their navy must now be correspondingly dejected. We are now superior to the Athenians in naval power, and so on. Our action is both most lawful and most pleasant, most pleasant because it is pleasant to defeat the enemy and get revenge, most lawful according to the principles proclaimed by the Athenians themselves.[xxi]

In chapter 69 there is an informal speech of Nicias. I think we should read that beginning with the second sentence.

Reader:
Nicias, perplexed with this present estate, and seeing how great and ho seems to imply tahtw near the danger was, being now on the point to put forth from the harbour, and doubting, as in great battles it falleth out that somewhat in every kind was still wanting, and that he had not yet sufficiently spoken his mind, called into him again all the captains of galleys and spake unto them every one by their fathers, their tribes, and their proper names, and entreated every one of them that had reputation in any kind not to betray the same, and those whose ancestors were eminent not to deface their hereditary virtues, remembering them of their country's liberty and the uncontrolled power of all men to live as they pleased—[xxii]

[xxi] Here Strauss seems to imply that the Syracusian leaders and Gylippus invoke the "Athenian thesis" in their speech, but they do not.
[xxii] Thucydides 7.69.2.

LS: Does this remind you of something, this remark? I mean, of course the other things are peculiar to the situation, but these general remarks—

Student: The funeral speech.

LS: Very good, almost literally. [Book] 2, [chapter] 37.

Reader:
and saying whatsoever else in such a pinch men are accustomed, not out of their store, to utter things stale, and in all occasions the same, touching their wives, children, and patrial gods, but such things as being thought by them available in the present discouragement, they use to cry into their ears.

LS: Now what he describes as "stale," "stale remarks," is in Greek, in a word which occurs only here in Thucydides, [*archaiologein*], "saying old things." What he means is what some people call in this country sometimes "a Fourth of July orator." You know, the old stuff all over again. And this must be applied in retrospect to the funeral speech. In the funeral speech there is something of this old stuff which has been said over and over again. That is, so to say, the last appearance of this way of speaking about Athens.

Now we have to follow somewhat more closely the particular incidents of the naval battle, not from the point of view of naval tactics, but of the human effect.

Student: In chapter 68, Hobbes translates [*nomimōtaton*], most natural.

LS: Where is that, which chapter?

Same Student: Chapter 68: "But also that to be revenged on any enemy is both most natural," and in the Greek it would be "most lawful." Would this by anything [. . .]

LS: No, no. Hobbes is one of the most curious great men of whom I know, because he was an extremely slow man. He wrote his first book of any significance when he was more than fifty. It is one of these most curious "psychological" problems, because Hobbes was an extremely gifted man but he took an unusually long time to develop. And what he did in his earlier time was trivial. He had a very strange career, you know; he was in Magdalen College in Oxford and got his B.A., never more than that. And then he later on got troubles with Wallis, the famous Scotch mathematician and Puritan.[4] You remember Hobbes was the opposite of Puritan; he was officially an Anglican. And also Wallis knew much more mathematics than Hobbes did, and the fact that Wallis was a doctor and Hobbes was only a B.A. of course played a certain aggravating role. Hobbes developed very late, and it is interesting—it may have something to do with his origin, his family background and so on, I don't know, but it may also be due to the fact that some people develop very slow[ly]. Hobbes was surely one of them. And no conclusions can be drawn, except the very general thing which is of course true: he must have known throughout his life Thucydides very well. We find many traces of that. I am sure it is nothing but a plain blunder if he mistranslates. One can see the development of Hobbes

even in the things of his period of maturity. The difference in style, for example, between the *First Elements of Law* in 1640 and the *Leviathan* in 1651: one can still see how he acquired that sovereignty, one can in a way observe that process. Between 1640 and 1660 at the most, he was at the top, and later on also there is no further development there, simply an elaboration. So no conclusions, please.

Now the battle, chapter 71; let us read at the beginning of the third sentence.

Reader:
Whilst the conflict was upon the water, the land men had a conflict and sided with them in their affections, they of the place contending for increase of the honours they had already gotten, and the invaders fearing a worse estate than they were already in. For the Athenians, who had their whole fortune at stake in their galleys, were in such a fear of the event as they had never been in the like, and were thereby of necessity to behold the fight upon the water with very different passions. For the sight being near, and not looking all of them upon one and the same part, he that saw their own side prevail took heart and fell to calling upon the gods—[xxiii]

LS: Let us stop here for one moment. The Athenian spectators, I mean the land troops watching the sea battle, not the fighters, call on the gods for help when there is hope. When things look badly, then they cease to call on the gods. That throws an interesting sidelight on this kind of piety. No matter how beautiful this description is, we simply cannot read that. Let us read only the last sentence or so of this chapter.

Reader:
And this was the time wherein of all the other they stood in greatest fear, and they suffered now the like to what they had made others to suffer before at Pylus. For the Lacedaemonians then, besides the loss of their fleet, lost the men which they had set over into the island; and the Athenians now, without some accident not to be expected, were out of all hope to save themselves by land.

LS: The Athenians suffer now the same as they had done. It begins like a kind of sermon. They expect to suffer now for what they had done at Melos—nothing of this sort. They suffer now the same thing that they had done at Pylos, not the moral but the military analagon. But this contains much more than we see. That will come out gradually. At the beginning of chapter 72.

Reader:
After this cruel battle, and many galleys and men on either side consumed—[xxiv]

LS: Rather than "cruel"—that may be idiomatic seventeenth-century English, but it wouldn't convey the same thing now—it is "strong," "powerful," "mighty."

Reader:

[xxiii] Thucydides 7.71.
[xxiv] Thucydides 7.72.

the Syracusians and their confederates, having the victory, took up the wreck and the bodies of their dead, and returning into the city, erected a trophy. But the Athenians, in respect of the greatness of their present loss, never thought upon asking leave to take up their dead or wreck, but fell immediately to consultation how to be gone the same night.

LS: Thucydides mentions it explicitly: if he had been silent about it after having mentioned the corresponding Syracusian action he would have told us. But Thucydides regarded it as important enough to say it explicitly. In this situation the Athenians had lost hope: they lost their piety, their concern with piety. Now in the next chapter there is described a clever device of Hermocrates to prevent the escape of the Athenians while there was still time by giving them false information and the Athenians go into their trap. This device was required because the necessary military action on the part of the Syracusians was prevented by a religious festival of theirs. But Hermocrates can circumvent these difficulties. In chapter 75, the third sentence.

Reader:
For their dead lying unburied, when any one saw his friend on the ground, it struck him at once both with fear and grief. But the living that were sick or wounded both grieved them more than the dead, and were more miserable.

For with entreaties and lamentations they put them to a stand, pleading to be taken along by whomsoever they saw of their fellows or familiars, and hanging on the necks of their comrades, and following as far as they were able; and when the strength of their bodies failed, that they could go no further, with ah-mes! and imprecations were there left. Insomuch as the whole army, filled with tears and irresolute, could hardly get away, though the place were hostile and they had suffered already, and feared to suffer in the future, more than with tears could be expressed; but hung down their heads and generally blamed themselves.[xxv]

LS: "Not without a few prayers," [*ouk aneu oligōn epitheiasmōn*]; the translator hesitated to translate that because one should expect "many prayers." Instead they saw only a few prayers. I think that is deliberately chosen. Some few prayers are still possible on the part of the fleeing soldiers on this particular occasion. Otherwise piety has disappeared. Now skip the next sentence, next few sentences, and go on.

Reader:
Neither were the sufferings of others and that equal division of misery, which nevertheless is wont to lighten it in that we suffer with many, at this time so much as thought light in itself. And the rather because they considered from what splendour and glory which they enjoyed before into how low an estate they were now fallen. For never Grecian army so differed from itself, For whereas they came with a purpose to enslave others, they departed in greater fear of being made slaves themselves; and instead of prayers and hymns with which they put to sea, they went back again with the contradictory maledictions; and whereas they came out seamen, they departed landmen, and relied not upon their naval forces but upon their men of arms. Nevertheless, in

[xxv] Thucydides 7.75.

respect of the great danger yet hanging over them, these miseries seemed all [but] tolerable.[xxvi]

LS: The loss of all hope leads to humility, the Greek word . . . which is often used in the translation of the Bible for the biblical humility. But the Hebrew humility is of course different; it is almost always used in classical times as a term of blame, abjectness. I know only two passages, one in Plato's *Laws* and the other in Xenophon's *Constitution of Sparta*, where it is used as a term of praise but in a characteristically Spartan context [in] both, Sparta being more old-fashioned. To be humble in regard to the authorities was there regarded as good.

We must not forget what is always hanging over us as readers, not the disaster but the reference to Pylos, the contrast between the Athenians on Sicily and the Spartan hombres at Pylos. The Athenians had come to enslave others, and now they are in danger of becoming slaves themselves. No longer prayers but curses, because the gods let them down. And then in chapter 77 Nicias's last address to the army. "There is still hope, for men have been saved from still more terrible situations. Nor should you blame yourselves for too much of the present undeserved sufferings, because that would make it unbearable. We got what we deserved. Look at me. My sufferings are surely undeserved, for I am pious and just. Because of my pious and just deeds I have hope indeed. Yet the undeserved misfortunes frighten me." What does that mean? Does he doubt that there is a direct relation between piety and well-being? Let us go on. "Yet these undeserved misfortunes may soon cease, for now our enemies are in good luck, and if our campaign should have aroused the envy of some god, we have been sufficiently punished." So there is then a direct relation between piety and happiness, but not such a simple one. Perhaps not I, me Nicias, but we Athenians aroused the envy of the god because of our campaign undertaken out of *hubris* due to prosperity. "And I suffer not as Nicias, but as an Athenian; but we surely have been punished enough for that. The crime which we may have committed is not worse than others have done. It is human," which means venial. This word "human" occurred earlier in an Athenian speech, if I remember well—I can't remember it exactly—when they said "What we have done, we Athenians, it was human." In other words, he identifies himself again here. And the punishment for such acts which are human keeps within limits. So the worst is over. He knows all of that.

I must say, the analysis of Nicias's character is very ruthless, merciless. Thucydides doesn't spare him. Let us look at chapter 79, the third sentence.

Student: May I raise a question about the very last sentence of Nicias's speech? Isn't it the last sentence of the last speech in the book?

LS: Yes, that is so. Isn't there a speech in the eighth book?

Same Student: There is no speech, no formal speech. Is this last sentence, "For men, not the walls nor the empty galleys, are the city," an echo back to Themistocles and the echo of the Platonic criticism of Themistocles [. . .] is this too much to think?

[xxvi] Thucydides 7.75.

LS: No, no, no, but it is very ironical for this reason. In the passage we read last time, when Thucydides describes the situation in Athens after the fortification of Decelia by the Spartans, he says the city was no longer a city but an outpost, a fort. The city is no longer there, and it is of course also—this is the city, that is why Athens has been reduced. And the statement is of course nevertheless absolutely taken, true. The city are the human beings, not the houses or anything else. There is in Aristotle's *Politics* a statement in these terms. Because there are no longer *andres*, men able to fight.

Same Student: It also reminds of Thucydides's statement that when the provisions are destroyed, that was crucial [. . .]

LS: Yes, sure. The materials—you can very well say, if you take this in the Aristotelian sense, the . . . the matter, that without which. That is the statement of Xenophon as a soldier in Asia Minor, when a Greek traitor coming over as an ambassador from the Persian king says they should hand over their weapons and then they could go back safely to Greece. Xenophon, who saw through this simple device—Churchill put it in the Second World War regarding Hitler's policy regarding Chamberlain: "You have the trust and we have the arms," i.e., you British have the trust and we Germans have the arms. And Xenophon saw through that, and he says that without our arms our virtue would be useless. That is what Aristotle later makes in the form: "Virtue plus equipment makes happiness." Virtue without equipment won't do.

Same Student: Is that not perhaps exactly the point here—that Nicias has separated his idea of virtue too much from the—

LS: Yes, surely. Naturally. But the plainest expression of that is in a hopeless situation, because if you have not the means of defending yourself all in the spirit in the world—if it would still survive—would be useless, I mean it might lead to a glorious death but it surely would not lead to the primary want, namely victory.

Same Student: When you mention the fact that they are no longer *hombres*, I don't understand this in light of the fact that Nicias in his speech four times alludes to the Athenians as hombres.

LS: You said this already in your speech, and I am grateful to you for your observation which I did not make. But I would say far from refuting me, that confirms what I say. To turn the table, I would say show me another speech in which a general addressing his army speaks so frequently of *andres*. As someone put it, one speaks most of the virtues one does not have, so one may speak most of those virtues of one's army which it does not have. They are in rags, so to speak. And then to make up for the defect of these people he must speak of their former virtue as if it were still present. It is interesting, your observation, but for the reason—

Same Student: There is just one more corollary to this in the fact that whenever he speaks of other men—it is just in this one speech, is the point I'm trying to draw—he uses the term *anthrōpos.*

LS: How interesting. That is marvelous. That only confirms more what I said formerly about the Pylos story—you know, the *andres*, they are always called, the *hombres*. And then Thucydides in his narrative goes over from Xenophon and calls them only *anthropoi*, poor wretches, ordinary human beings. You can't do that in English, but you can do it in Latin: [*viri*] and *homines*, although *homo* does not have this derogatory meaning in Latin which *anthrōpos* in Greek has. *Anthrōpoi* is the worst thing you can say about a man; to a slave . . .

Same Student: That includes women, too.

LS: I think they would say . . .

Same Student: Well, you could say "anthropoid" means the human race—

LS: Sure, sure, absolutely. No, but I think we have a very good example in Spanish, a language which I do not know except for the single word *hombres*, and this word is still used fully in this meaning—very virile, very wealthy, and very respected. The key passage on this word, by the way, is in Xenophon's dialogue *Hieron*, [in] about the center, if I remember well, the ambitious men are described—they are *andres*, no longer called *anthrōpoi*, the men who have the tyranny.[xxvii]

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but they have to. They have to.

Same Student: Well, I was thinking they might have gotten out of the last part of the dilemma if they had done this. But the men themselves—

LS: At a certain point, I forgot which, Demosthenes also seems to have lost his judgment. I forgot now which it was[xxviii] . . . this situation was of course hopeless. Now we must read a few more passages, and then I would like to summarize it all. In chapter 79—we don't want to read it now—we see a description of a thunderstorm, and rain comes and the Athenians become still more out of heart. And they believe that all these things happen for their perdition. In other words, while they have lost all hope from the gods, they still retain their fear of the gods. In the sequel in chapter 81, we have an incident of Nicias's quickness, but too late. Chapter 86 . . . Chapter 86, where he speaks of the end of Nicias and Demosthenes. Read the whole chapter 86.

Reader:

[xxvii] Xenophon *Hiero* 7.3.
[xxviii] Is Strauss thinking of 7.49.4?

The Syracusians and their confederates, being come together, returned with their prisoners, all they could get, and with the spoil into the city. As for all the other prisoners of the Athenians and their confederates, they put them into the quarries as the safest custody. But Nicias and Demosthenes they killed, against Gylippus' will. For Gylippus thought the victory would be very honourable if, over and above his other success, he could carry home both the generals of the enemy to Lacedaemon. And it fell out that one of them, Demosthenes, was their greatest enemy for the things he had done in the island and at Pylus; and the other, upon the same occasion, their greatest friend.[xxix]

LS: You see, there are holes[xxx] from every point of view, also from the Spartan point of view.

Reader:
For Nicias had earnestly laboured to have those prisoners which were taken in the island to be set at liberty by persuading the Athenians to the peace. For which cause the Lacedaemonians were inclined to love him; and it was principally in confidence of that that he rendered himself to Gylippus. But certain Syracusians, as it is reported, some of them for fear (because they had been tampering with him) lest being put to the torture he might bring them into trouble, whereas now they were well enough; and others, especially the Corinthians, fearing he might get away by corruption of one or other, being wealthy, and work them some mischief afresh, having persuaded their confederates to the same, killed him. For these, or for causes near unto these, was he put to death; being the man that, of all the Grecians of my time, had least deserved to be brought to so great a degree of misery.

Student: "Having regulated all his life in accordance with what has been considered virtue."[xxxi]

LS: Hobbes omits that; that is probably a good translation. Only Nicias received the eulogy from Sparta.[xxxii] We have often spoken about this particular passage. And let us read now only towards the end of the next chapter, the end of the book, when he makes a remark about the war in general.

Reader:
And this was the greatest action—[xxxiii]

LS: The greatest Greek action. This is in all manuscripts and only some modern editors leave it out.

[xxix] Thucydides 7.86.
[xxx] This is as it appears in the transcript.
[xxxi] The student reads from David Grene's note to 7.86: "Here is one of Hobbes' inexplicable omissions. The Greek reads 'having least deserved to fall into such misfortune, *having regulated all his life in accordance with what has been considered virtue*."
[xxxii] Nicias receives no eulogy from Sparta, so the transcriber may have misheard Strauss here.
[xxxiii] Thucydides 7.87.

Reader:
that happened in all this war, or at all, that we have heard of amongst the Grecians, being to the victors most glorious and most calamitous to the vanquished. For being wholly overcome in every kind and receiving small loss in nothing, their army and fleet and all [that they ever had] perished (as they use to say) with an universal destruction. Few of many returned home. And thus passed the business concerning Sicily.[xxxiv]

LS: Now the effect on Athens will be described at the beginning of book 8. Only this point: it was the greatest Greek *ergon*, deed, during the Peloponnesian War. And it was not necessarily the greatest deed of all men during the Peloponnesian War. For example, the story of Sitacles—you know, of that northern barbarian mentioned toward the end of book 2, this army was larger than the army involved in Sicily. And there is also a story which belongs to the Peloponnesian War in period, but [is] not described by Thucydides, but only in the beginning of Xenophon's *Hellenica*, a continuation of the *History*, a Carthaginian army invading Sicily was also more considerable.[xxxv] The passage is clearly a correction of the very beginning of the book—you know, the biggest war simply. It was not quite the biggest war because we have gradually learned also to consider the limitations of the Greeks and to realize that the barbarians are human beings.

Now let me summarize what I believe are the main points here. Demosthenes was killed because of Pylos as the greatest enemy of the Spartans. And we have also seen that there comes before a comparison of Sicily, the whole Sicilian business with the business of Pylos. Yet there is obviously a very radical difference between Sicily and Pylos, not only regarding size of the island as well as the forces, but above all regarding the *pathos*, the sufferings. Is this due to Thucydides's Athenian patriotism? That would not be a sufficient explanation. The story of the *andres*, the *hombres* having become merely human beings, you remember that; in contrast with what happened in Sicily, in retrospect the whole affair of Pylos appears as a sheer comedy compared with what happened to the Athenians in Sicily. And you remember what we observed in the descriptions of the central year of the war, the fourteenth year, about the comedy of Sparta; you know the strange contradiction: they are so secretive and nothing is easier than to figure them out because of their great orderliness and other things. And also the Aristophanean touch in the reply of the Spartan regarding the criterion of courage or manliness. You remember, the speaker made a remark at that time which I did not take seriously, but in retrospect I think it does have to be taken seriously. You remember when the nasty Athenian ally said to the Spartans that "the dead ones, they are the true Spartans." And then the Spartan said, "Well, it would be easy if a spindle"—meaning the arrow, a spindle, i.e., a feminine tool—"would be the criterion for distinguishing between good men and bad men."[xxxvi] I mean, this also belongs to this comedy of Sparta.

I would say this. At the end of the book I incline to entertain this notion that on the deeper level of Thucydides's thought there is a contrast between the comedy of Sparta and the tragedy of Athens. Yes, but what is tragic? We have no right to attribute to

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[xxxiv] The square brackets and parentheses appear in the original.
[xxxv] Xenophon *Hellenica* 1.1.137, 1.5.21.
[xxxvi] Thucydides 4.40.2.

Thucydides Aristotle's famous definition, to say nothing of Arthur Miller's definition. And of course Thucydides doesn't speak of tragedy; that is a great difficulty I pointed out to a former speaker on an unforgettable earlier occasion.

Now then let us try to state something with the greatest care, caution. Surely that which arouses compassion without a tincture of contempt. I mean, if you have compassion which says "this poor fish," that is not a tragic remark. There must be no contempt. The undeserved great suffering of a noble man [. . .] So the undeserved death of a noble man fighting against disaster against which a man can fight.[xxxvii]

Undertaking a noble task and succumbing to the magnitude of the task without any fault of his own—is this tragic? [. . .] But isn't the element of fall somehow essential, as Aristotle seems to be saying, i.e., the disproportion of fault and disaster (as Aristotle explains).[xxxviii] And this motif is alluded to in Nicias's last speech. If this is true, then there must be fault indeed. But the disproportion between fault and disaster must be such that our sense of justice being done gives away to compassion without contempt. Take, for example, Richard III or Macbeth, superficially read. The feeling "justice is done" is clearly at first reading much more powerful. But undeniably, Thucydides has meant us to have compassion for the Athenians in Sicily and as much compassion as we feel for the poor Mycalessians, you remember, the small city overrun by the Thracians. We forget the black deed of Melos which was worse than what the Spartans and Thebans did to Plataea and think rather of Mytilene—you remember the hair-breadth escape of the Mytileneans by virtue of Athenian compassion.

Our compassion for the Athenians in contradistinction to the Mytilenians is somehow linked up with the active nobility of Athens. There must be something noble in the aspiration to universal power, and something which Athens deserves or has a right to: the daring of everything for the sake of immortal glory. In this light, if I may use this slightly improper parallel (do you see why it is improper?) Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, then Sparta looks like Sancho Panza, the peasant who has his feet on the earth and doesn't believe in the fantastic dreams of Don Quixote. Only the improper thing is that Don Quxiote is not a tragic figure, at least not on the surface. If you see someone who [5]for a noble dream squanders himself.

In other words, Athens' *megalopsychia* or magnanimity—her regarding herself worthy of great things by being worthy of them contrasted with Spartan *oligopsychia*, lack of this. I think it is connected with this fact: Thucydides uses the word *eros*, apart from narrowly conceived *eros* in the story of Aristogeiton and Harmodius in book 6, only once, of Athenian *eros* for Sicily. Beyond the considerations of justice there is something noble in that. Yet Thucydides's eulogy of Nicias—there is no eulogy of the Athenians. The Athenians are never praised as such by Thucydides himself. All praises are either self-

[xxxvii] The transcriber notes: "A defect in recording took place at this point and the tape which follows is barely audible. Hence all typed material that follows here is liable to substantial errors."

[xxxviii] Aristotle *Poetics* 52b28-53a7.

praises like Pericles's or left-handed like those of the Corinthians. An individual rather the city would seem to appear the hero, the tragic hero.

But the true hero of Sicily is not Nicias but Demosthenes—or Athens, if you want to speak of Athens in so far as it is Demosthenean rather than Nicias's. And Sicily—of course the comparison of Sicily to Pylos draws our attention most forcefully to Demosthenes, because Pylos was Demosthenes's [victory] and not Cleon's. Cleon only exploited it in the last minute. Demosthenes's fate deserves compassion without contempt, and is in no way deserved. He did not start the Sicilian expedition, even in that indirect way in which Nicias did it. You remember his inept attempt to stop it. Demosthenes is sent out in order to save the Athenian force, which could still be saved. He would have saved it but for Nicias. His only fault, if you can call that a fault, [is that] he is not a natural ruler, a man whose authority, whose commanding power asserts itself in all circumstances. He accepts his duty and he fails in it because all the odds are against him. Yet he is in no way a gambler. I think we must keep these three phenomena in mind which are either narrated in the context of Sicily or emphatically [. . .] Compassion plus admiration—that I think is perhaps the deep praise of Athens by Thucydides. You see how subduedly it is done.

From here there falls light on the beginning of the eighth book: Athens after Sicily contrasted with Sparta after Pylos. Sparta after [Pylos] just gives up, and Athens after Sicily begins over again. [. . .] We must reconsider these things in the light of the difference between the *polis* and the individual man. What is Athens, what does she stand for? Primarily, at first glance, "imperialism," and that means, if you follow its logic, to rule over all, in the first place over all Greeks, but in principle over all men. Imperialism is universalism of a kind, over all men. Such universalism ultimately and necessarily fails. No one has been able hitherto to rule the whole world, and even if, God forbid, Communism would win we have already seen that Khrushchev cannot even rule China now. But there is however another universalism which can succeed, and that is the universalism of understanding. One can, at least in principle, be capable to understand the whole, and that is indicated by Thucydides very clearly. And that I say in clarification of something I did not succeed in making clear last time with reference to these broadest principles, motion and rest; you could also say becoming and being, which comprises all. By understanding that we understand in a sense everything.

Now the peculiarity of Athens, this political universalism which is fantastic and tragic, and hardly even in itself comical, is however colored and suffused by the true universalism of the desire for understanding. That is indicated in the funeral speech with the word *philosophia*. But precisely this synthesis of political and intellectual universalism shows the impossibility of the thing. Now it seems to me that it is equally important from Thucydides's point of view to admire the attempt at synthesis [. . .] and to understand its impossibility. My error in previous presentations, including the first half of this seminar, was that I did not pay sufficient attention to what Thucydides wanted us to see—I mean, clearly to see the actual possibilities is absolutely necessary, but also to have a proper respect for the greatness of the attempt to try the impossible. And that is what Athens stands for.

I would go one step further [. . .] you know, we are scientists and all our statements are provisional, as we hear in every methodological course. Athens in Sicily is in a sense greater than Periclean Athens according to Pericles's own standard. For what is the sign of the greatness of Athens? "That she left everywhere memorials of evil and good things."[xxxix] [. . .] that is undecided. But what is the greatest memorial of victory in the Peloponnesian War? What is that? Overlooking the situation at least as described hitherto.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but if you take into consideration not only in terms of the fruits involved, but also of the political significance, I think one must say Pylos, Demosthenes. But what about the greatest memorial of evil, Sicily? There is no event in Periclean Athens comparable to that. That I think is something which we must keep in mind, that the fullest phenomenon of Athens means both, a twofold universalism. I hope I don't have to explain that word anymore. All-comprehensive, rule of all men, understanding of all things, but the impossibility of this synthesis and the impossibility in particular of political universalism does not take away the admiration for the human greatness, the great-souledness, inaudible.

I believe I have now made the fullest retraction of what I said on a former occasion with you, sir. But I would say all the more that that was implied in what I said, not in order to win the argument but to show what convinced me. That is not the argument of the funeral speech. The funeral speech reflected somehow, reflected, but is not on the level of this thought which Thucydides suggests.

Pericles assumes a simple harmony between the two universalisms, and there he is wrong—of course he is a Fourth of July orator. You know what I mean by that. I don't deny that there may be very skilled Fourth of July speakers [. . .]

Student: [. . .]

LS: But you see, is it not perfectly clear that this consideration which I present somehow includes a plea for Alcibiades.

Student: [. . .]

LS: We will come across Alcibiades even more in the eighth book, because in a way his greatest triumph comes in the eighth book when he is the arbiter of the whole Greek world and also of the whole of Persia. So that I knew a long time ago [. . .] That is a triptych: in the center is Pericles; the two wings are Themistocles and Alcibiades; and Pericles is the norm, normal in the best sense of the word, and these two are the abnormal, criminal, but gifted. In the case of Alcibiades it is perfectly clear: Alcibiades could not have lived together with Athenian democracy under any circumstances. Sooner

[xxxix] Thucydides 2.41.4.

or later that would have led to something approaching this; whereas Pericles was in fact a monarch, whereas in law, you know, he was one of the ten generals and it was only due to his ascendancy that he became the leading man.

Now all these things I say are in need of a very careful reconsideration, also what I said about the greatest disaster, for example [. . .] surpassing all Periclean disasters. One would simply have to go over the history of the first book [. . .] and compare the discussion of the fifty years between the Persian War and the Peloponnesian War and compare it especially with the disaster in Egypt [. . .] But the main point is that one understand the possibility, you know, the things to be taken into consideration. Which of these possibilities will stand up under severe scrutiny is a matter more for one's own study or for so called production. You know what "production" means, don't you? Publication.

Student: [. . .]

LS: The old commentators say, at least those that I have read, that when he describes the story of Cylon, you remember in book 1 when the Spartans recall the Athenian's curse,[xl] then an old commentator or scholar says, "Here the lion laughs," the lion being of course Thucydides. That is the only one.

Student: [. . .]

LS: After my present reading I would say there are quite a few occasions in which, if one understands, one must laugh. [. . .] And also the description of the Spartans' wonderful battle order, and the old laws, and the king had no longer the old power so some commissars had to follow him and say, "Don't do that!" contrary to all Spartan ancient order, and many more. And don't forget the funeral speech. I'm sure Thucydides doesn't write like Aristophanes; there anyone even at the most superficial reading and however unsophisticated must laugh all the time. No one can be more severe. There are many passages in Plato where you must laugh, where everyone must. In the *Protagoras*, the fantastic beginning, where the janitor doesn't let them in, you remember, and the description of how his house was so full of company that one of them—a glutton, by the way—had to live in the pantry. And there are other things in Plato which are very amusing at first reading, and at deeper readings are even more. But in Thucydides—I think there is no more severe writer.

Student: If one were to read Thucydides without the traditional knowledge of the difference between Athens and Sparta, would one not miss this dimension of intellectual universalism? Because Thucydides doesn't mention it at all, and might we not see Athens in a different light altogether?

LS: Very good, but I think the ideal interpretation would be supported only by what the author himself says. In practice it is not possible, you can imagine. In other words, as

[xl] Thucydides 1.126. The saying that Strauss reports is that of an anonymous ancient critic called a Scholiast.

Plato put it, a [. . .] A speech must be like a living being, i.e., self-sufficient in performing its function. And that is very true, but you would come to that shortly, not at the second or third reading, but sooner or later. For instance, when we read this remark about Brasidas, he was a good speaker for a Spartan, [it] throws some light on him, doesn't it? And in addition, the funeral speech [. . .] Then at one point or another, you would I think begin to ponder about the first two words of the book: Thucydides, the Athenian. Thucydides, that was a man from Athens who could write this book. And this would be what qualifies the connection. [. . .]

But on the other hand, these three things are mentioned so obviously everywhere—in Plato, Xenophon, Herodotus. It was really common knowledge at the time. This is not a very grave risk to assume Thucydides knew this. And I think even from Thucydides's own book the crucial point comes out, only in many details. And what these things show is only the severity of Thucydides, who is silent on all these matters. And on the other hand, it is not mere severity; it is perhaps only [. . .] I mean, what would we have gained if when speaking of Acragas he had said: Well, you know, of course, Empedocles comes from there, or Leontini, the place where Gorgias came from. What would we have gained? Would it not be impertinent, irrelevant, immaterial? You know? In the nineteenth century people began to write history, political history, and felt it necessary to speak about the intellectual situation of the time. I remember this four-volume work on the Civil War—Commager,[xli] or two men wrote it—and this was quite informative, whether you agreed with the author's point of view of not. And then he had also to add a chapter on the intellectual life, and the contrast was very unpleasant. Here the man talks in a brilliantly imposing manner about military affairs and then he does something which is not more than a mere enumeration. And I have seen it also in some German histories of the nineteenth century. The deeper reason I believe is this: about deeds, whether military or political, it doesn't make any difference; the only way of knowing about them is to speak of them, or to write of them, apart from those who were present at the time. It is absolutely sensible to do that. You can and must narrate and describe deeds; you cannot and should not describe thoughts. That cannot be done. In that I include also works of art. That is simply insipid, even if it is—how do they call it?—very effective, I don't know what the words for that are, but you know what I mean. [. . .]

Thought can only be understood by thinking and not by mere listening, as you can listen to a narrative. And Thucydides presented the thought of Athens in the only proper wa, namely, by thinking. If we reflect back from the narrative, and do that with every speech, to the man who wrote the book—in other words, if we have understood the book, we have understood Thucydides's thought. And then we see Athens [. . .] That is the only way. If he had made any remarks about the great men of his time, Themistocles and so on and so on, it would have been [. . .] I don't say it cannot be done; in his way Herodotus did it, who didn't limit himself so severely to the political and military. But Herodotus

[xli] Henry Steele Commager (1902-1998), American historian and liberal public intellectual. It is unclear to what co-authored and multivolume work Strauss is referring; Commager did not co-author a four volume book on the Civil War, although he did co-author a multivolume history of the U.S.

found[6] another way . . . gossip.[xlii] [. . .] I am willing to be contradicted, of course, but I would say—for example, I remember the book which I have read about the great thoughts. These are particular interpretations of a particular work. But they cannot possibly form part of a history. But that would not affect what I said at all. You can say you can put together an analysis of all the tragedies of Sophocles and all the comedies of Aristophanes, but this is entirely different because these interpretations are meant to be mere theories. Ministerial. In other words, they are meant to be a help for the reading of these things.

But clearly the study of the Peloponnesian War is not meant to be a help for the waging of the Peloponnesian War or for waging war in Vietnam, or wherever it is. What I say now is by no means sufficient, obviously, but I think we have to think about it. We take too much for granted that such a thing as intellectual history, so-called, is possible. Do you see my point? Thucydides is surely the beginner of the great tradition of political history of the severe kind, and that, you know, has had infinite effects up to the present. Since the eighteenth century a deep dissatisfaction showed in men like Voltaire and also Gibbon. It is too much—political history, where you have to—and also the loathing of these constant stories about battles and cabinets, and the real life of the people was lost. And this led them to something like social history, and then also the so-called cultural history. And today that is taken absolutely for granted, and if someone says that political history is the nerve of history, he is regarded as absolutely reactionary. But one must remember this: it must be considered, whether there is as a matter of course such a thing as social and cultural history which can be written in the same way as political history, so to speak, must be written . . . I speak of cultural and intellectual history rather than economic history, because economic history in itself is a relatively innocent thing. I mean, whether it is so terribly important as some people believe and, for example, if we had a real economic history of the Peloponnesian War we would understand the Peloponnesian War better—some people seem to believe that. I doubt it. If Thucydides had thought it so important . . .

[xlii] This might be a mistranscription due to the poor quality of the audiofile. It is unclear what Greek term—presumably one occurring in Herodotus? —Strauss might have translated as gossip.

Session 16: no date
Book Eight, chapters 1-47

Leo Strauss: [i]May I put a question to you regarding the assignment as a whole? At the end of book 7 we had reached a certain overall view of the Athens–Sparta conflict. I mean, if I use now the more . . . expression: the Spartan comedy, the Athenian tragedy. How does book 8, as far as you have studied it [. . .] in the light of this sweeping characterization? If we use another provisional term, is book 8 less dramatic than book 6 and book 7?

Student: I would think so, yes.

LS: Still, there are very striking changes of the situation—*peripeteias*, you could say: the recovery of Athens, the changes effected by Alcibiades, the impending change of the Athenian polity. But if we think of drama as either tragedy or comedy . . . these truly dramatic events. Think of Alcibiades today as the leader, the compiler of foreign policy, the next day the object of extra-legal execution prevented by quick flight; then he turns up as the compiler of Persian policy. But all sins are forgiven by the Athenians now because they need him, and he controls now the fate (a) of Persia and (b) of Athens. I mean, one cannot call it a tragedy.

Same Student: That would be a comedy in view of—

LS: Almost a comedy. I couldn't help but have this feeling, although the fate of great societies is at stake, there is something really comical about that, I mean, about this extraordinary versatility. In other words, one sees not only the great effectiveness of that versatility but also [sees] it as comical. Now surely this poetic element which book 7 has is absent from book 8. And book 8 is the first book without speeches; that was stated by someone last time. Well, one must of course say that the beginning of the book, the Archaeology, chapters 1 to 23, is of course also free from speeches. But one could say . . . but one could say that book 8 is surely part of the history and has no speeches. But I think we have to qualify that. I had a vague recollection that this was not literally true, and I have seen now that we come to that—but [there are] practically no speeches in book 8. This great artistic device, so important in the core of the work, now recedes, perhaps because the device has fulfilled its duties and there is no longer any need for that. To imply . . . schematical—you have done it in the first seven books, you must do it [in] book 8—is of course not the peak of artistic wisdom. But in order to understand that one would have to consider the speech or speeches of book 8, why they are in at all.

There is another explanation possible, [and] that is the usual explanation: he died before he had finished book 8. That may be so, but we don't know. We have also to consider the alternative, that what we have is what Thucydides wanted to give, and if there were any refinements they could very well be regarding the length of sentences and this kind of thing and not necessarily regarding the overall object. No one can know, but one has to consider that possibility that chance was less important for the construction of the book as a whole than it would be according to the ordinary view that Thucydides has made notes—what happened, say, from summer or

[i] The transcriber notes: "This tape is very defective and large parts of it are inaudible."

winter to winter—and then started to write coherently and from the beginning a first draft, and finishing up to book 7 but not finishing book 8. This is of course a merely hypothetical version that this is what happened, that book 8 is the only radically unfinished book. It may be as finished as the others, and the whole may lack a certain finish, although I am sure that in the case of a writer of this stature, ordinary critics cannot find out what is a flaw and what is not. I mean, that would require a writer as great as Thucydides himself, or almost.

One could also say regarding the relation of book 8 to book 7 [. . .] the tragedy of Athens appears to be not a tragedy but is a tragedy only provisionally. In a tragedy a hero goes down terribly, but Athens does not go down. In other words, we abstract from later developments [. . .] the expeditionary force in Sicily goes down, but not Athens; and therefore one must correct, perhaps, the statement that book 7 describes the tragedy of Athens.

Now at the beginning of book 8, as our speaker has stated, we become aware of a fact that was not mentioned before: Thucydides does not always tell at a given place the whole story. Sometimes he anticipates: for example, in the eulogy of Pericles in 2.65, he gives a comparison of Periclean policies with the post-Periclean policies, including Sicily. That is to say he jumps ahead about fourteen years. But on the other hand, when he describes something like the beginning of the Sicilian expedition, he omits something which is of utmost importance. Let us read the beginning of book 8.

Reader:
When the news was told at Athens, they believed not a long time, though it were plainly related and by those very soldiers that escaped from the defeat itself that all was so utterly lost as it was. When they knew it, they were mightily offended with the orators that furthered the voyage, as if they themselves had never decreed it. They were angry also with those that gave out prophesies and with the soothsayers and with whosoever else had at first by any divination put them into hope that Sicily should be subdued.[ii]

LS: Divination means . . . by some other divine means other than soothsaying and oracles. So we learn here for the first time that oracles played a considerable role in inducing the Athenians to make the Sicilian expedition. Why is that of some importance?

Student: Nicias.

LS: Can you spell that out?

Same Student: Because of Nicias's very religious nature—

LS: Yes, but how would this work out, then?

Same Student: The thing that would appear to me at first hand is that it is intimated that . . .

LS: That his resistance was not as strong as it could have been. That indeed is reasonable to assume. So in other words, behind the inept handling of the situation, remember he made a

[ii] Thucydides 8.1.

speech which reinforced the Athenians' desire to undertake the expedition, that he may have been influenced by that. This is something which I think one cannot help considering. The effect on the Athenians is then described in the sequel; after a short period of depression there comes a period of recovery. We can skip the next three sentences or so and read the last two or three sentences of this chapter.

Reader:
Nevertheless, as far as their means would stretch, it was thought best to stand it out and, getting materials and money where they could have it, to make ready a navy and to make sure of their confederates, especially those of Euboea; and to introduce a greater frugality in the city, and to erect a magistracy of the elder sort—[iii]

LS: "Of older men."

Reader:
as occasion should be offered to preconsult of the business that passed.

LS: Those of you who remember the discussion in Aristotle's *Politics* will detect here an element of nondemocratic, that the predeliberation prior to the decision of the assembly proper is a nondemocratic institution. So as it were—well, you have an equivalent in this country, the committees of the House and of the Senate and the seniority there, and how they limit simple majority vote. An analogy: if there is a magistracy which has to decide which measures, which bills are to come before the assembly, and in which order and when, they of course limit popular government. The Greek term which he uses here is [*sōphronisai*], that the affairs of the *polis* should be made more moderate with a view to thrift. It is important that this word moderation occurs here. It is a change in Athens, not institutionally yet to speak of, but in mood toward a less democratic policy. This foreshadows the later political changes.

Reader:
And they were ready in respect of their present fear (as is the people's fashion), to order every thing aright.

LS: The Greek word here is [*eutaktein*], to behave in an orderly fashion, again a word expressing Spartan likes. So we see then that democracy as far as the institution goes is unshaken, but there is a certain turn of the mood toward greater sobriety and . . . Now in the immediate sequel there is also something which we must read, at the beginning of the next chapter.

Reader:
The winter following upon the greatest overthrow of the Athenians in Sicily, all the Grecians were presently up against them. Those who before were confederates of neither side thought fit no longer though uncalled, to abstain from the war—[iv]

LS: Universal hatred of the Athenians shows up now. Now this theme was discovered in book 2, chapter 8, when Thucydides speaks of the situation at the beginning of the war—you know, that

[iii] Thucydides 8.1.
[iv] Thucydides 8.2.

it was understood as a war of liberation, all Greeks against the tyrant city. Now whether this universal hatred was so simply true we have had reasons to doubt; not all allies of the Athenians were merely forced. You remember the Acarnanians who followed Demosthenes to Sicily out of friendship for him, and last but not least (that will come out later), there was a cleavage within most of the cities between the rich and the poor, and the poor being at least somewhat more sympathetic to Athens than the rich. And that is one of the overstatements which Thucydides makes from time to time. In order not to be misled we must see or consider the context to which they belong. I don't believe Thucydides has changed his mind, or [that] we could find out the change of his mind from his book. But when then say a pro-Spartan argument and an anti-Spartan argument in the book—or an anti-Athenian argument, if you please—and the Spartan argument originally brought up the war of liberation, a war against the Athenians, and in this context the statements of the universal hatred of Athens makes absolute sense.

The difference between the peace treaties, or the alliance treaties with the Persians to which our speaker referred, has something to do with that. That was not simply Sparta—you know, it was an absolute disgrace to make an alliance with the national enemy, Persia, against another Greek city, and in addition to hand over to him, to the Persian king, all the Greek cities that once had been subject to his rule prior to the Persian War. And Lichas, who comes up later,[v] he is an honorable Spartan in this sense, that he is concerned with Greek unity and Greek interests, and not simply in ruining Athens by hook or by crook.

Well, at the end of chapter 2 it appears that the Spartans' hope of a clear hegemony of all Greece, so a simple system of free cities, free and equal cities, is not envisaged. And the line between hegemony and empire is difficult to draw, as we could see perhaps in the second half of chapter 3.

Reader:
And the Lacedaemonians imposed upon the states confederate, the charge of building one hundred galleys; that is to say, on their own state and on the Boeotians, each twenty-five; on the Phoceans and Locrians, fifteen; on the Corinthians, fifteen; on the Arcadians Sicyonians, and Pellenians, ten; and on the Megareans, Troezenians, and Hermionians, ten. And put all things else in readiness presently with the spring to begin the war.[vi]

LS: You see there is no deliberation whatever: Sparta imposes. We see here the transition from leadership to empire. Then in the sequel, chapter 5 following, the strategic possibilities are discussed. The key alternatives concern two islands: Lesbos, on which is Mytilene—you remember Mytilene which escaped, which barely escaped in the time of Cleon, book 3—and Chios. And Chios, we see, is the most powerful ally of Athens, and Chios is very rich. We will come to Chios later. So the question is: "What shall we do? Shall we liberate first Lesbos or Chios? The Spartan king Agis who is commanding in Decelea"—Decelea being the Spartan fortress erected near Athens—"or shall we liberate first Chios?" And the Chians themselves, of course, want Chios; so does Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap. And the decision goes in favor of Chios. The Spartan king Agis is tacitly overruled. And this decision is due to whom? Why do they go to Chios? Do we have a map of Asia Minor? [LS goes to the map.] At any rate, Lesbos is

[v] Thucydides 8.43.3-4, 8.84.5.
[vi] Thucydides 8.3.

in the north. Here is Chios, and here is Lesbos [. . .] What decided the operation against Chios rather than Lesbos?

Student: Alcibiades.

LS: So you see [. . .] So Alcibiades really settles it. And the Spartans with their usual caution want first to find out the situation in Chios, whether it would so easily be taken, whether it would be so easy for Chios to desert the Athenians; and they find out it is easy and they decided therefore to invade Chios. So that is clear, then: by taking away Chios from Athens there would be a very great weakening of Athenian power. Yes, but what happens next? It is in chapter 6, the last two sentences or so.

Reader:
And when the messenger brought back word that all that had been said was true, they received both the Chians and the Erythraeans presently into their league and decreed to send them forty galleys, there being at Chios, from such places as the Chians named, no less than sixty already. And of these at first they were about to send out ten, with Melanchridas for admiral; but afterwards, upon occasion of an earthquake, for Melanchridas they sent Chalcideus, and instead of ten galleys they went about making ready of five only in Laconia.[vii]

LS: You see Sparta is the same still. And while the substitution of one man for the other and the reduction of the force to half would be more in the sense of the earthquake, we are not told. The name Melanchridas—*melan* means black—whether that was regarded as a sinister sign, I don't know. But at any rate, his party is not sent.

And then there follows in the sequel—we cannot read that—another delay in the expedition against Chios on the part of the Corinthians, which was due to the holy day there. Let us turn to chapter 11, the second half.

Reader:
The Lacedaemonians, have been advertised of the departure of these galleys from the isthmus (for the ephores had commanded Alcamenes when he put to sea to send them word by a horseman), were minded presently to have sent away also the five galleys also that were in Laconia, and Chalcideus the commander of them, and with him Alcibiades. But afterwards, as they were ready to go out, came the news of the galleys chased into Peiraeus, which so much discouraged them, in respect they stumbled in the very entrance of the Ionic war, that they purposed now not only to send away those galleys of their own but also to call back again some of those that were already at sea.[viii]

LS: You see again a very slight setback surprises or endangers the whole expedition. Of course it is not the Peiraeus of Athens; according to the reading here preferred it is called Speiraeus. It is a harbor in the Peloponnesus into which the Peloponnesian fleet was driven by the Athenians. Now we must read the next chapter. Go on with that.

[vii] Thucydides 8.6.
[viii] Thucydides 8.11.3.

Reader:
When Alcibiades saw this, he dealt with Endius and the rest of the ephores again not to fear the voyage, alleging that they would [make haste, and] be there before the Chians should have heard of the misfortune of the fleet, and that as soon as he should arrive in Ionia himself, he could easily make the cities there to revolt by declaring unto them the weakness of the Athenians and the diligence of the Lacedaemonians—[ix]

LS: The zeal, the zeal of the Lacedaemonians. In other words, the situation is completely changed. Athens is weak and the Spartans, the never excited Spartans, develop zeal.

Reader:
wherein he should be thought more worthy to be believed than any other.

LS: On the basis of what? Well, on the basis of his intelligence, surely, but there are also other minor difficulties.

Reader:
Moreover to Endius he said that it would be an honour in particular to him that Ionia should revolt and the king be made confederate to the Lacedaemonians by his own means, and not to have it the mastery of Agis—

LS: The Spartan king. You see, everything becomes [1][intelligible].[x]

Reader:
for he was at difference with Agis. So having prevailed with Endius and the other ephores, he took sea with five galleys, together with Chalcideus of Lacedaemon, and made haste.[xi]

LS: So you see, again the intervention of Alcibiades is decisive. If Alcibiades had not been in Sparta, the great victory of the anti-Athenians forces in Sicily would have had no significant effect. And the eighth book is the book of Alcibiades. I mean, he is the center figure in every respect. Now then an alliance is concluded—of course ultimately due to Alcibiades's intervention—between the Persian king and the Spartans against the Athenians. We can only take the high points. If I omit in my story anything which one of you regards as very important, you should interrupt me. Let us turn to chapter 21 now.

I must say one thing which is decisive everywhere for the action now in the sequel. The base of the Athenians in Asia Minor is the island of Samos. That is safe in Athenian hands.

Student: In number 6, when the nineteenth year ends, this has been the longest year of the war, as far as pages.

LS: Which year?

[ix] Thucydides 8.12.1.
[x] In the transcript: "intelligent."
[xi] Thucydides 8.12.2-3.

Same Student: The whole nineteenth year, namely, the whole expedition to Sicily [. . .]. Is there any connection with this in the numbers that you can see, or not?

LS: No, not immediately. It may very well be that it is the most decisive and important year as far as actions are concerned . . . Now let us read chapter 21.

Reader:
It fell out about the same time that the commons of Samos, together with the Athenians who were there with three galleys, made an insurrection against the great men and slew of them in all about two hundred. And having banished four hundred more and distributed amongst themselves their lands and houses (the Athenians having now, as assured of their fidelity, decreed them their liberty), they administered the affairs of the city from that time forward by themselves, no more communicating with the Geomori nor permitting any of the common people to marry with them.[xii]

LS: So in other words, there was a radical democratic revolution in Samos, with Athenian assistance, obviously. Now how did he say at the beginning, how did he call the people opposed to the *demos*? Thucydides says "the powerful ones, the powerful ones." You see how severe that is. No intermarriage possible. I mean, the leading families are absolutely in the doghouse, at the price of their property and even at the price of intermarriage, so deep is the enmity. This is an important comment on the statement about the universal hatred of the Athenians. We can now identify where this thesis that the Athenians were universally hated is located; I mean what party formula there is.

Student: The oligarchic.

LS: The oligarchic city. I mean this simple wisdom of which present-day scientific social science is so boastful—you know, the fact that society consists of parts or parties, and that what is presented as the thesis of that society is not necessarily subscribed [to] by each member of the society, or even each section of the society, was of course absolutely familiar to Thucydides, as you see from this. That would be an important question; here when he speaks of the universal hatred of Athens in chapter 2, and also in earlier places when he as it were reproduces the oligarchic thesis, to what extent does Thucydides simply identify his position with that of the oligarchic party—or let me be more cautious, with the nondemocratic party? That would be an important question.

Student: [. . .]

LS: That is what Phrynichus says, if I remember well. Then there is always the question to what extent Thucydides agrees with that, you know. I mean, that Phrynichus is a man of judgment, as a former speaker found out in his paper, does not absolutely mean that everything he says is true, because judgment can also show . . . therefore one has to look carefully.

[xii] Thucydides 8.21.

Now he describes in the sequel, among other things, the Athenian successes against Chios, and we must then take up one of the key passages of the book which has very much to do with the issue of oligarchy. That occurs in chapter 24. Read only the second half of that chapter.

Reader:
After this, the Chians went out no more to fight; by which means the Athenians made spoil of their territory, excellently well furnished. For except it were the Lacedaemonians, the Chians were the only men—

LS: From the time of the Persian Wars until then.

Reader:
that I have heard—

LS: "I have heard," that is perhaps not the best translation. In the first place, Thucydides emphasizes the "I," which you cannot do in English, you know. You can do it in Latin and Greek: "which *I* have heard." And "heard" means which I have perceived, which could also include hearing but might also mean which I have seen with my own eyes. In other words, was he in exile at some earlier time in Chios? I do not know. But he emphasizes the "I": "*I* have seen." In other words, there may be other places of the same kind which I have not perceived. Also he doesn't say that they are the only ones among the Greeks. You know? He says the Spartans first, the Chians afterwards, among those I know, from my own experience. There may be such people among the barbarians, for example, or there may be such people in Sicily among the Greeks. We don't know.

Reader:
that had joined advisedness to prosperity—

LS: He means that they have been both happy—the full term, or prosperous, if you want to, and had acquired moderation. So they combined prosperity with moderation. To combine prosperity with misery is relatively simple—to combine moderation with misery, I mean. You have not the things inciting to *hubris* if you are shivering from cold and other things, but if you are well-to-do, then the dangers are great.

Reader:
and the more their city increased, had carried the more respect in the administration thereof to assure it. Nor ventured they now to revolt (lest any man should think that, in this act at least, they regarded not what was the safest) till they had many and strong confederates with whose help to try their fortune, nor till such time as they perceived the people of Athens (as they themselves could not deny) to have their estate after the defeat in Sicily reduced to extreme weakness. And if through human misreckoning they miscarried in aught, they erred with many others, who in like manner had an opinion that the state of the Athenians would quickly have been overthrown. Being therefore shut up by sea, and having their lands spoiled, some within undertook to make the city return unto the Athenians. Which though the magistrates perceived, yet they themselves stirred not; but having received Astyochus into the city with four galleys that were with him from

Erythraea, they took advice together, how by taking hostages, or some other gentle way, to make them give over the conspiracy. Thus stood the business with the Chians. [xiii]

LS: Now that I think is a very important passage because it is one of the broadest judgments which Thucydides makes in the whole book.

Student: The oligarchy here was also moderate.

LS: Yes, but it was of course formerly a democracy, but in fact—yes, sure, that is proper. That is one point, yes. And the other point which we have to consider is—oh, we must not forget, of course, that Chios had deserted from Athens, and this probably went together with an oligarchic revolution. That is not said, but we must infer that.[xiv] So it is now oligarchically ruled. Now what is the characteristic of moderation which comes out very clearly here? I mean, after all, the occasion for this remark is that the Chians seemed in this particular case not to have acted with moderation; therefore he must defend their reputation for moderation as he does. Now what seems to be immoderate in the Chian action here?

Student: The fact that it might be too risky.

LS: That's it. So moderation, in other words, is concerned, has an overriding concern with security. You know, the rich—we find also remarks about that in the eighth book of Plato's *Republic*, where he characterized the rich: they have a lot of things they don't want to lose. "Status quo" is I believe the term now used: status quo: no change, hence no risks. And but here they did take a risk. Were they not foolhardy, were they not daring and hence unwise, immoderate? How does Thucydides defend them?

Student: Well, they weighed the situation with great care and in light of the realities.

LS: In other words, if you call it an error, it was an error which no one in their situation could have avoided, and therefore their reputation for moderation is not affected.

Student: It is an unusual defense, because he first distinguishes them from others—they are after all unique in this period except for the Lacedaemonians—and he defends them because everybody else would do the same or had done the same. In other words, he first distinguishes them, and then he comes back to defend them by—

LS: Yes, but does it not essentially amount to this, that he says they are outstanding? Thucydides says that they are outstanding and comparable only to the Spartans. And then he says, Well, here they seem to have made a mistake which no moderate city would make. And then he says [that] every moderate city, to say nothing of immoderate ones, would have made the mistake because there was no risk according to all probability. That is the point.

[xiii] Thucydides 8.24.

[xiv] There is no indication in the text of Thucydides that Chios had ever been a democracy, any more than Sparta had been one.

Student: This seems to bear out the argument of the Mytileneans that there is nothing in the treaty which is binding—

LS: Thucydides does not say that they acted unjustly or wickedly; he only says they might have acted imprudently.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but there is something else, an event of the utmost importance in the whole book, of which we are reminded here by Thucydides, I think. I mean, was there another case of a revolt from Athens or resistance to Athens on the part of Sparta-like people?

Student: There are the Melos people, who counted on help when there were no reasonable grounds.

LS: Exactly. You see the great delicacy of Thucydides. The way he presents the Melians, you could almost say he was ashamed to criticize them because of the nobility of their resistance. It comes out only in this indirect way: Why did they not wait? The Melians were not moderate. They were a colony from Sparta and they were Spartans in every respect, but that is, I think, of very great importance. The Chians acted reasonably, and reasonableness cannot be defined merely in terms of success or failure. Success or failure may be due to chance. The Chians, by the way, took all the precautions which men could take. No one could know how great the resilience of Athens was. This implied judgment on Melos I believe has also to be considered if we tried to understand Nicias, given the fact that there is a certain similarity between Melos and Nicias—we discussed that when we discussed book 6: the Melians with their trust in immanifest things; Nicias with his trust in immanifest things.

Student: It seems that in Thucydides, whenever you have the weak confronted with the strong, the strong tend to absorb the weak. And I am wondering [. . .] a place like Chios would almost necessarily be replaced by Sparta or by Persia.

LS: Yes, sure, that is in the cards [. . .] But that is not the way in which people think. You see, let us look at it in more specific terms. The Chian *demos* would have preferred Athenian supremacy; the Chian rich would have preferred Spartan supremacy. So it does make a difference to Chios, I mean, the city as a whole, because it would make such a great difference to its two components. It is not quite the same—by which empire you are ruled, you know. That is clear. Perhaps—I hope it will never happen, but perhaps the Indians will find out one day the difference between the British Empire and the Chinese Empire. I mean, one cannot reasonably wish it except as a kind of beautiful poetic lesson. This is a consideration which one must not forget. That is surely the lesson. Hobbes stated it later on with his usual bluntness: Small states owe their survival only to the jealousy of their neighbors. I mean, Switzerland between Germany, France, and similar cases; and of course not now that we have the rule of justice by the United Nations, but in bad times before, Switzerland would surely have been swallowed if Germany or France had become hopelessly weak or vice versa. She was swallowed by France in Napoleon's time. There may be reasons for keeping such a small state independent, even very low reasons. For example, quite a few people had nest eggs, if you know what that means, of the different powers—Nazis and

Fascists, and others—in Switzerland, and one could never know what would happen there. And in Switzerland they knew they were absolutely safe because the Swiss have such a severe law—you know, the owner of a safe or safe-deposit can never be mentioned even to the Swiss government. This is for every one of you who thinks of political adventure, it is an important thing for you to know. No, there are various reasons why great powers may be interested in having others free. It is not as simple as that; I mean, the chances of hegemonial and imperial powers developing and subjugating or controlling more or less the weaker powers. But there are all kinds of things: a certain weak power may be wonderfully located so that it owes its freedom to a certain location. To some extent that could also apply to Switzerland, which was in former times, at any rate, very hard to conquer because of the high mountains.

Student: In connection with the discussion about the Chians and liberty: later on, Thucydides makes a brief mention of the fact that Sparta had governed Chios,[xv] and I was wondering if this would mean that they were influenced by them.

LS: Yes, that is the beginning. The name occurs already in Thucydides—how they were called later on, *harmosts*. And they become very much hated after the Peloponnesian War because of their brutal—you know, certain tough, stupid ruthlessness. Well, of course Sparta had then the imperial control of Athens for some decades,[xvi] and then partly with the help of Persia the balance was redressed.

Student: On the point about moderation, about being prosperous and moderate, I wonder if there is a direct contrast to the last sentence of the first chapter of the book. He says about the Athenians, "As is the way of a democracy, in the panic of the moment, they were ready to be prudent as possible." [. . .]

LS: You mean, in the oligarchy it is the prevailing, habitual and—yes, sure. He also said that they are willing to keep good order out of fear. He doesn't say they actually kept good order. Sure, that I think is the point. Thucydides regards as it a constitutional weakness of democracy, the fickleness of the *demos*; I mean the old-fashioned harsh view that people who have little to lose are not as dependable as people who have much to lose. It is very harsh, but that was a maxim on which mankind acted until a relatively short time ago. Now the next passage to which we should turn is at the end of chapter 26.

Reader:
Alcibiades coming a horseback to Teichiussa of the territory of Miletus, in which part of the gulf the Peloponnesian galleys lay at anchor, they were informed by him of the battle; for Alcibiades was, with the Milesians and with Tissaphernes, present in it. And he exhorted them—

LS: More than that: he fought, he fought on their side.

Reader:

[xv] The text contains no such mention.
[xvi] Spartan "control" of Athens proved exceedingly brief, as did the duration of Sparta's hegemony.

unless they meant to lose what they had in Ionia and the whole business, to succour Miletus with all speed and not to suffer it to be taken in with a wall.[xvii]

LS: Yes, the Athenians were—well, they besieged Miletus on the Asia Minor mainland. Again you see that Alcibiades is absolutely the driving force. The Athenians would have conquered Miletus in a very short time but for the intervention of Alcibiades. And we see, even more, he was fighting on the wrong side, not only advising. This from a popular point of view might make his actions even more wicked than mere advising, although one doesn't know why. It surely sounds more terrible. At this point we make the acquaintance of the antagonist, Athenian antagonist of Alciabiades, Phrynichus, and I think we should read that chapter.

Reader:
According to this, they concluded to go the next morning and relieve it. Phrynichus, when he had certain word from Derus of the arrival of those galleys, his colleagues advising to stay and fight it out with their fleet, said that he would neither do it himself nor suffer them to do it, or any other, as long as he could hinder it. For seeing he might fight with them hereafter, when they should know against how many galleys of the enemy and with what additions to their own, sufficiently and at leisure made ready, they might do it, he would never, he said, for fear of being upbraided with baseness (for it was no baseness for the Athenians to let their navy give way upon occasion—[xviii]

LS: Does this remind you of something, of a similar situation, where someone does not act on this principle; I mean, not interested in what people will say against him?

Student: McCarthy.[xix]

LS: Who? In this country—

Same Student: Well, he was a man who certainly flaunted his enemies in this country.

LS: But seriously, that is regarded as a controversial position, whereas Thucydides's subjects are no longer controversial, or at least not to the same degree. No, but there is a very similar case, a very important case. Nicias, sure. Can you tell me why?

Student: He was afraid to leave, for fear of what would happen.

LS: He was afraid of being dishonorably murdered, executed. And Phrynichus doesn't care;[xx] Phrynichus is truly a prudent man. Now let us go on.

Reader:

[xvii] Thucydides 8.26.
[xviii] Thucydides 8.27.
[xix] Senator Joseph McCarthy (1908-1957), U.S. Senator from Wisconsin from 1947 to 1957.
[xx] There is a blank space here in the transcript; perhaps a word was inaudible.

but by what means soever it should fall out, it would be a great baseness to be beaten), be swayed to hazard battle against reason and not only to dishonour the state but also to case it into extreme danger—

LS: This is a consideration wholly absent, you remember, from Nicias at the key moment when Demosthenes tells him, "Let's go home, as long as it is possible."

Reader:
seeing that since their late losses it hath scarce been fit with their strongest preparation, willingly, no nor urged by precedent necessity, to undertake, how then without constraint to seek out voluntary, dangers? Therefore he commanded them with all speed to take aboard those that were wounded and their landmen and whatsoever utensils they brought with them; but to leave behind whatsoever they had taken in the territory of the enemy to the end that their galleys might be the lighter; and to put off for Samos, and thence, when they had all their fleet together, to make out against the enemy as occasion should be offered. As Phrynichus advised this, so he put it in execution, and was esteemed a wise man, not then only, but afterwards, nor in this only, but in whatsoever else he had the ordering of. Thus the Athenians presently in the evening, with their victory unperfect, dislodged from before Miletus. From Samos the Argives, in haste and anger for their overthrow, went home.[xxi]

LS: The Argives had been defeated in the previous battle in which the Athenians had won, and that affects the situation. Let us keep Phrynichus in mind when we read the sequel. He proves to be a wise commander and he defeats, in a way, Alcibiades. He abandons Miletus because it was wiser to abandon it than to court defeat. But he will later have a great deal to say against Alcibiades. Let us now make a big jump to chapter 40; we must concentrate on the most important points. The siege of Chios by the Athenians goes on.

Reader:
The Chians and Pedaritus about the same time, notwithstanding [their former repulse, and] that Astyochus was still backward—

LS: These men, Pedaritus and Astyochus, are Spartans.

Reader:
sent messengers to him, desiring him to come with his whole fleet to help them, being besieged, and not to suffer the greatest of their confederate cities in all Ionia to be thus shut up by sea and ravaged by land, as it was. For the Chians having many slaves, more than any one state except that of the Lacedaemonians, whom for their offences they the more ungently punished because of their number, many of them, as soon as the Athenians appeared to be settled in their fortifications, ran over presently to them; and were they, that knowing the country so well, did it the greatest spoil.[xxii]

[xxi] Thucydides 8.27.
[xxii] Thucydides 8.40.

LS: Is this not of some importance?

Student: It is another great instance of the Chians' great similarity to the Spartans.

LS: Can you elaborate this?

Same Student: Well, the Spartans were having the same difficulty as long as the Athenians were encamped at Pylos and that region: they were continually losing their slaves. Besides that particular instance, throughout the war there was a continual fear of slave revolts.

LS: Helots rising.

Same Student: I was thinking that it seems to be that when you fear something strongly enough, close to you and still external to you, that situation is conducive to the greatest moderation.

LS: Yes, that is the point which I wanted to bring out. We have seen two characteristics of Chios as well as of Sparta: (a) moderation; (b) a large subject population, whether slaves or helots does not make any difference. Now the question of course is: Is there a connection between them? And you seem to have alluded to it, but you didn't make it quite clear. Is there a connection between these two characteristics, moderation on the one hand, and a very large subject population on the other?

Same Student: Well, you ought to be sure of the loyalty of a large portion of your population. It is probably a little rash in some circumstances to go on great foreign adventures when you can't supervise the dissenting forces at home at the same time.

LS: I interrupt to say that you are known for the pithiness of your explanations, and I implore this characteristic to come to your aid now. You may state it in the form of a hypothesis, if you don't dare to say more.

Same Student: The caution of both the Chians and the Spartans was largely due to their lack of confidence in their domestic population.

Student: The greater the number of slaves, the greater the moderation of the city.

LS: That comes closer.

Student: Can it be that slaveholding, or the holding or subject people—and this ties in with our former formulation that moderation is tied to fear of losing what one has. In other words—

LS: Yes, but there is of course a difference between, say, land, houses, cattle, and what have you on the one hand, and human subjects on the other. I mean, it is a debatable point, at least. After all, cattle cannot conspire against you, murder you, etc. [. . .]

Student: [. . .]

LS: Machiavelli says there must be a proportion between the forcer and the forcee. But could one not say that Thucydides suggests, on the basis of these two examples, that this moderation is a function of a large subject population? In other words, this moderation has its seamy side. And this would of course raise very grave questions—that Thucydides is very critical of Sparta, as we have seen, on more than one occasion. [. . .][xxiii] —We have to think of the British Empire, too, and so he[xxiv] said that it was not suitable to the moral climate of the twentieth century. And that refers to other things, that in the modern century the principles of imperialism have become absolutely discredited as defensible principles. But for all ages, I believe it is true that every government, every city, claims to be legitimate, not only in its inner structure but also in its holdings. You know? I mean, the Romans didn't permit their subject peoples to question the legitimacy of the Roman conquests, you know. The Romans said a very simple thing: they had conquered all these countries either in self-defense or in helping their allies. Now needless to say, these are not sufficient titles, to help your allies and [aim] to defeat your allies' enemies: to swallow both the enemy and the ally. But however hypocritical these things are, the thing is that no established order permits effective questioning of its authority, that is clear.

But the question which we have is much more grave than that, namely: Should it be true that a wise policy—because that is what is meant by moderation—that a wise policy is possible only under certain conditions, and these conditions, if analyzed, prove to be not different from those underlying the unwise policy? In a word, past imperialism in contradistinction to present imperialism. That must be very important. Surely Thucydides wants us to raise this question.

Student: When I read this passage, I also thought of [. . .] and that is the relation of rulers to cities, to slaves [. . .] to the relation of Athens with her empire, and that you might be able to argue that as the empire became more threatening to Athens, the city itself became more moderate. In the beginning of this chapter, after the tremendous loss of Athens before Syracuse, the fear not of Sparta so much as of their allies, their tributaries and what would happen—they were to moderate Athens' desires.

LS: In other words, this would mean, if I understood correctly, if there is no fear present, immoderation almost inevitably follows. But still there remains this thing which we cannot forget: that moderation, other things being equal, is superior in human dignity to immoderation. I think this [is what] Thucydides thinks very seriously, and yet how can it be maintained if moderation itself, generally speaking, is linked up with certain conditions which are morally neutral? Let us say it more generally: moderation is morally superior to immoderation. Yet morality rests on conditions which are as seamy as the conditions of immoderation. Do you see that? I think Thucydides maintains both. He would say [that] however you get moderation, its very presence is salutary. You know? And you are not likely to get it in a perfectly pure form, so that it has its base only on moral principles. I mean, there were surely Spartans who were just, sober, and decent men—Lichas, I think, is an example. But even those who were not decent were compelled by the helots problem to be satisfied—to demand, even a policy which is on the whole moderate.

[xxiii] The tape was changed at this point.

[xxiv] In the transcript, this pronoun lacks its antecedent. This is likely due to the tape change, which obscured part of Strauss's remarks. To whom is he referring? Churchill, whom he mentions so frequently? If so, I have been unable to trace the quotation.

You see, in modern times, in modern political philosophy we have become so accustomed to this interplay of morality and immorality that we are perhaps [in]sufficiently aware of it. Private vice, public benefit, and so on. You know Mandeville[xxv]—all these bad things, greed and lechery, keeping up with the Joneses, and all the really despicable things make the whole system work. I mean, if there were no people loving luxury, how many people would become unemployed? You know these famous stories. In a way, the whole modern economic system is based on these principles, so we are accustomed to it. Passion can only be fought by passions. In Hobbes's doctrine it is fear of violence, and not dispassionate moderate principles, which is underlying civil society: rewards and punishments, not selfless devotion; this kind of thing. And I think that is surely also implied by Thucydides, but in Thucydides it does not lead to a low cynicism of the whole understanding of man. That is the striking characteristic of him. He sees these connections, but they are not the whole story of man. He knows that there are people who are genuinely moderate, not because they think of their holdings, you know, he knows that. But on the other hand he seems to imply that for political purposes, without these harsh connections, you know these harsh and unsavory connections, you will not achieve anything.

Student: I wonder if there isn't a tie-in with Diodotus and capital punishment and the resistance to the slaves.

LS: Yes, that would interest me extremely, if true. Now can you state it?

Same Student: Well, perhaps the Athenians, in an attempt to increase moderation, tried to build a fear into the state, the function of which would be supposedly to prevent crime and increase moderation.

LS: Not the Athenians, the Spartans.

Same Student: No! It was in the speech of Diodotus: he spoke of the increase of capital punishment over—

LS: But not in Athens in particular.

Same Student: Oh, I see. It was more general.

LS: Yes, but the application would be, if feasible, to Sparta and Chios. They had to be harsher than others, which was perfectly all right as long as they had their police force available. But as soon as the police force was drafted in[to] the army they had to pay for their harshness. I don't see the connection with Diodotus, unless you mean to say that at the beginning, when there was no capital punishment, there was not yet empire. And that is surely true, [that with] the development of empire, harshness in a way increases with it.

[xxv] Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), Dutch-born British physician and philosopher, author of one of the most sensational works of the eighteenth century, *Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714), whose argument Strauss here summarizes.

Student: Would you say that this kind of thing is the same or different than Aristotle's implication of the cautiousness of the politics by requiring slaves in his best regime?

LS: You mean this, if I understand you correctly, that since slaves, of which he speaks in books 7 and 8 are not natural slaves, therefore an act of injustice was committed by making them slaves. Without this injustice, the best regime of books 7 and 8 would not be possible. More generally stated, no well-ordered society without some injustice built in. Yes, to that extent it is the same. And yet somehow something seems to be different in the present problem, and I cannot lay—I mean, Thucydides would not disagree with that general thesis, but this seems to have an additional point which I cannot isolate.

Same Student: Doesn't there seem to be a direct relation between fear of slaves and moderation in Thucydides which is lacking in Aristotle?

LS: That is very good.

Same Student: In Aristotle, the conditions are mere conditions for the development of a moderate character. In Thucydides, the conditions determine the moderation by simply putting a leash on the passions. It is striking the way that the Lacedaemonians immediately begin to tyrannize, or at least establish empire over, the subjects as soon as they have the opportunity.

LS: Yes, and in a way they are of course also compelled to do that. You know, they must get the ships from these cities. And these cities don't want to do that, but compulsion is inevitable, and the compulsion increased.

Same Student: [. . .] There seems to be another equation in this, this relation of moderation and character, moderation in politics and the presence of slaves. I lost my train of thought—

LS: We will try something different from what you say, and in the meantime maybe you will recall. That is this: I can state what you intend in a very general way, and I don't know then whether it will come down to cover what you said. We must never forget the fact that Aristotle is the first thinker who spoke of moral virtue—I mean, the term is coined by Aristotle. Now in the case of Plato one can easily prove that the absence of the term is of crucial importance. For Plato there is no middle between what he calls political or vulgar virtue, which is always selfishly inspired, and true virtue, i.e., philosophic virtue. As he puts it in the *Phaedo*, for example, the men who are courageous in the ordinary sense of the term are only a kind of coward. They fear something else; out of fear, say, of shame, they are courageous. So they are courageous out of cowardice. The people who are temperate in the ordinary sense are temperate out of intemperance. The simple case is the man who is intemperately desirous of wealth and is therefore very temperate regarding food and drink, and so on. So in all spurious virtue—all nonphilosophic virtue is spurious. That doesn't mean that is wholly unimportant—it is terribly important, as Plato emphasizes—but it is not genuine virtue. Aristotle's teaching of moral virtue implies that moral virtue, i.e., the virtue of which nonphilosophers are capable, is genuine virtue.

Now in Thucydides this is very complicated. I mean, there is surely a connection between what he means by moderation and caution, and other forms of prudence in the modern, not

Aristotelian, sense of the term: mere calculation of expediency. In other words, do it this way, you have a wonderful opportunity to get away with murder—"murder" I use now in a metaphoric sense, I mean do something quite outrageous—and yet you make one single reflection: next time the shoe may be on the other foot. This time it works all for you; next time it may work against you. And therefore you, out of this calculating thought, you avoid certain courses, immoderate choices. But then something happens. I believe that is also what Thucydides means, although he never speaks about it, only his presentations can suggest this to one: that if long-range calculation, I mean far beyond the present moment in the immediately foreseeable future, if this becomes really habitual, he becomes a different man. Long-range calculation [becoming][2] habitual makes you moderate, or at least makes it practically impossible to distinguish between the long-range shrewd calculator and the genuinely moderate man. This would be compatible with the view that—to use the Aristotelian terms—moral virtue is something different from mere calculation, and yet to see also what kinds of funny things can build up the habit. For example, you have such a large slave population. You must keep it constantly in mind, and then what may come out of it may then be something which (a) looks like . . . Moderation looks nicer than rationalism, and[3] in quite [a] few cases may be genuinely nice. You know? And yet if you are clear sighted, you cannot disregard the fact that the prevalence of moderation in Sparta has something to do with this terrible burden they have: the helots, the terrible crime they committed against their brothers[xxvi] centuries ago. I think Thucydides wants us to see both sides, both that the intrinsic dignity is not destroyed by the seamy side, and yet [that] the seamy side is there.

Whereas the alternative would be debunking, and that I believe is not the style or the manner of thinking of Thucydides—contrary to Machiavelli. But these things are very hard to prove. The indirect proof would be—at least convincing to me—would be the tragic element in Thucydides, which is completely absent from Machiavelli, and this recognition of genuine tragedy is not possible without the recognition of genuine nobility. I mean, if you do not understand a tragedy along the lines of *Death of a Salesman*,[xxvii] a tragedy which I have not read but someone explained it to me, and it seems to be no tragedy in the Aristotelian sense of the term. Is there anyone here who has read it? Do you agree?

Student: You mean no nobility?

LS: That was the point.

Same Student: It is a very moving play. It's probably not in the Aristotelian scheme, but it is a very moving play in a very tragic way.

LS: Well, I think I must read it someday. So let us then turn to another passage. The other side of Sparta comes out in chapter 43, in the second half of chapter 43, when Nicias comes up.

Student: I was reminded of the point you made at the end of the last meeting of the seminar about the universalism, and it seems to me that another factor in sort of the conservatism, the

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[xxvi] Again Strauss seem to exaggerate the proximity of the Spartans to the Messenians whom they conquered and reduced to helots.

[xxvii] A play by Arthur Miller, first performed in 1949.

keeping-at-homeness of Sparta, is the incompatibility of its social institutions with those of any of the other Greeks, as has been pointed out, for instance, by the Athenian ambassadors—

LS: And also Pericles.

Same Student: And also that they do make a mess of ruling other people whenever they get out. It seems as if the internal constitution of Sparta itself, as well as producing a caution and unwillingness to move also produces sorts of attitudes of mind and social structures which are incapable of being universalized in some way. They cannot be the basis of a wider political unit. They are appropriate only to a small city, somehow.

LS: Yes, how could one—you mean an empire must have a broader base—

Same Student: It must have a broader basis if it is going to work at all. The Spartan regime itself would operate in a *polis* but has no resources, no theoretical resources for getting outside of that, while from the Athenian model something might later on.

LS: In other words, Athenianism is exportable, in a sense, if I may use a Mussolinian phase. Not Athens, but Athenianism. It can be learned: the skills, the knowledge of the Athenians can in different degrees be learned by non-Athenians. Sparta—that is practically impossible.

Same Student: Not merely learn, but make the basis of a wider social and political entity in a way—

LS: That would confirm what I tried to say last time, that there is some connection between the political universalism of Athens and its intellectual universalism. Just as an art or a skill, a knowledge, can be transferred—I mean, people in Sicily, and theoretically even barbarians, can learn that. The peculiar institutions of Sparta cannot be learned. You know?

Same Student: And they also prevent the Spartans from being able to think in universal terms.

LS: Sure, sure. Well, strictly speaking (not in the present-day use of the term), nonintellectual, if the intellect is that capacity by virtue of which man can universalize. Now there is another point regarding Sparta, I said, in chapter 43, when Lichas comes up.

Student: I was just thinking—this is rather wild—that one of the differences between the Spartan form of subjugation and the Athenian is the difference between Spinoza and Hegel: the difference between all determination as negation and all negation is affirmation. In the one case, the Spartan case, the determination would constitute the negation—that is, the negation as interpreted—I mean, yes, well, in any case. In the Athenian case it is different. The negating is the affirmation; in negating, in subjugating other people, you include the others in the very act of negation and therefore determine a culture. In the Spartan case you simply affirm the negation, and hence you negate them, i.e., subjugate them, but maintain yourself in the process. Do you see what I mean?

LS: I don’t think you need to use these metaphysical terms. I understand it better without them.

Same Student: But I seem to have this picture in my mind that perhaps you could say that the difference between, well [. . .] Hegel and Spinoza. Spinoza had a particular society, and Hegel the universal society—that no society—

LS: Hegel has no universal society. Some present-day Hegelians, more precisely a single present-day Hegelian asserts that Hegel was striving toward the universal society embracing all mankind. The historical Hegel thought of nation-states which are exclusive of one another. The equation is not as simple as you have stated it. And strict universalism means really a universal state. I mean, when I spoke of Athenian universalism, I meant here of course something which was never achieved, which can never be achieved, and which was not even explicitly intended by the Athenians. What the Athenians had intended was to conquer Sicily, conquer Carthage, and then come back to the Greek mainland, and then perhaps beyond. In other words, it was boundless because no bounds were set. You know? Only in this sense can one speak of political universalism.

Same Student: Out of particular private interests you do not have the universal as its intention; the universal is negated.

LS: Yes, but what does this mean in practice? I mean, one would clearly have to go into Hegel's philosophy of the state. It means then that there is the perfect union between the particular and the universal as achieved in the modern state. And this modern state is a strictly European, preponderantly Protestant affair.

Student: I didn't hear what you said in the last part.

LS: It is a particularly European and more specifically even [a] Protestant affair. While Hegel was for full religious parity in practice, it is a great difficulty in Hegel's doctrine that his state as he understands it is Protestant in origin. That is a great difficulty. Hegel surely did not teach the universal state. If I may now use metaphysical terms, following you, the state belongs in Hegel to the objective mind, the objective spirit. Beyond it is the absolute spirit in art, religion, and philosophy. The necessity of going beyond the state to art, religion, and philosophy is due to the fact that a full reconciliation is not possible on the political plane.

Same Student: Not even in Hegel?

LS: Not even in Hegel. Hegel was not an idolizer of the state. I mean, some people who haven't understood him and who loathe Prussia believe that.

Same Student: [. . .] There was never a complete reconciliation between spirit and matter. Is that what you are saying?

LS: No, no. The reconciliation is evident for Hegel, because matter is only spirit in an alienated form. That is not difficult. No, no, the reconciliation is there, but in its perfect form only in philosophy—in less perfect forms, (a) in religion, (b) in art. And it is surely not there on the political plane. This creates great difficulties for Hegel, I know that, but still, it is very hard to

find a philosophy which has not some difficulty somewhere which we cannot so easily dispose of.

Student: You're not saying, sir, that he intended that the final state would be Prussia; for he said at the end consciousness has enabled us to go thus far. He never tries to predict the future, as Marx does. He just—

LS: But there is no future to speak of, for Hegel. That is not a great problem for him, how the Germans would solve the problem of their unity, [whether] under Prussian leadership, under Austrian leadership, or maybe under diarchic leadership. That's all I mean to say; that is surely merely political. But the fundamental problem is solved: the world is now in a condition in the advanced countries of Europe in which all the politically insolvable difficulties can be solved. You have now both the intellectual and the material means for solving them, that's all. For Hegel there is no prediction of the future because there is no future to predict. What could happen and what he could not know is there may be all kinds of relapses into barbarism, you know, and all kinds of stupidities, of course, but there is no invention of the first order possible or necessary anymore, whereas Marx makes the decisive inventions on the future. [4]Now let us then read about Lichas.

Reader:
But Lichas was he that considered the business more nearly, and said that neither the first league nor yet the later by Therimenes was made as it ought to have been; and that it would be very hard condition that whatsoever territories—

LS: One could almost say, "that would be shocking."

Reader:
the king and his ancestors possessed before he should possess the same now; for so he might bring again into subjection all the islands, and the sea, and the Locrians, and all as far as Boeotia; and the Lacedaemonians, instead of restoring the Grecians into liberty, should put them into subjection to the rule of the Medes.[xxviii]

LS: This was not sufficiently brought out by you in your paper. Lichas intervenes—that is a different kind of Spartan, a Spartan with a sense of honor, and he sees the conflict between these principles, this honorable principle of Greek liberty versus Persia, and this is in a way more important to him than the defeat of Athens. This we must keep in mind. We have now to proceed a bit faster.

In chapter 45 this conflict between Alcibiades and the Spartans comes to the fore for the first time. We must read that, because it is really crucial.

Reader:
In this time, as also before the going of the Peloponnesians to Rhodes, came to pass the things that follow. Alcibiades, after the death of Chalcideus in battle at Miletus, being suspected by the

[xxviii] Thucydides 8.43.3.

Peloponnesians, and Astyochus having received letters from them from Lacedaemon to put him to death (for he was an enemy to Agis, and also otherwise not well trusted)—

LS: Of course, this is the unfortunate consequence of his brilliant actions; you know, that is built in.

Reader:
retired to Tissaphernes first, for fear, and afterwards to his power hindered the affairs of the Peloponnesians. And being in everything his instructor, he not only cut shorter their pay, insomuch as from a drachma he brought it to three oboles, and those also not continually paid, advising Tissaphernes to tell them how that the Athenians, men of a long continued skill in naval affairs, allowed but three oboles to their own—

LS: Is that not wonderful, how he uses this expert knowledge from Athens of how to settle the affairs of the Persian king?

Reader:
not so much for want of money, but lest the mariners, some of them growing insolent by superfluity, should disable their bodies by spending their money on such things as would weaken them—

LS: Is this not also charming? Alcibiades, the preacher of temperance! It is absolutely beautiful.

Reader:
and others should quit the galleys with the arrear of their pay in their captain's hands for a pawn; but also gave counsel to Tissaphernes to give money to the captains of the galleys and to the generals of the several cities, save only those of Syracuse, to give way unto it. For Hermocrates, [the general of the Syracusians,] was the only man, that in the name of the whole league stood against it.

LS: Hermocrates is an anti-Alcibiadean in that Peloponnesian camp, just as Phrynichus in the Athenian: outstanding men, but not comparable to him in genius and versatility, as we see.[xxix]

Reader:
And for the cities that came to require money, he would put them back himself and answer them in Tissaphernes' name, and say, namely to the Chians, that they were impudent men—

LS: The people whom Thucydides had praised for their moderation: now we see them as they appear in the light of Alcibiades. It is very interesting. "Impudent"?

Reader:
being the richest of the Grecian states and preserved by strangers, to expect nevertheless that others, for their liberty, should not only venture their persons but maintain them with their purses—

[xxix] It seems that one could question Strauss's judgment that Hermocrates is a lesser figure than Alcibiades.

LS: You see, this of course fits beautifully into a wider sense of moderation. You don't spend unnecessary money, you let the others pay.

Reader:
and to other states, that they did unjustly, having laid out their money before they revolted that they might serve the Athenians, not to bestow as much or more now upon themselves; and told them that Tissaphernes, now he made war at his own charges, had reason to be sparing; but when money should come down from the king he would give them their full pay and assist the cities as should be fit.[xxx]

LS: This is, I think, an absolutely wonderful, absolutely high comedy: Alcibiades speaking for Tissaphernes laying down the law, and at the same time a preacher of morality. So maybe that is some very remote effect of his youthful relations with Socrates, for all we know. Thucydides doesn't say anything about it.

What happens now is this: Alcibiades's suggestion to the Persian king, which means let the Spartans and the Athenians mutually slit their throats to the advantage of the Persian king. But this suggestion works in the situation as pro-Athenian, because hitherto the Persian king was on the Spartan side. Now any removal of the king from the Spartan side means by this very fact that he is moving in the Athenian direction. And this goes [in] parallel with Alcibaides's need for Athens. I mean, he had no future in Sparta anymore, that was clear, and seriously, he couldn't expect to become the Persian king, so the only thing to do was to find a way back to Athens, and he is beginning now to become the benefactor of Athens. Absolutely one of the most fantastic stories which were ever written and which ever happened, it seems to me. At the beginning of chapter 47 we have a brief statement of the same.

Reader:
Now Alcibiades advised the king and Tissaphernes to this whilst he was with them, partly because he thought the same to be indeed the best course, but partly also to make way for his own return into his country, knowing that if he destroyed it not, the time would one day come that he might persuade the Athenians to recall him. And the best way to persuade them to it, he thought, was this: to make it appear unto them that he was powerful with Tissaphernes. Which also came to pass.[xxxi]

LS: You see, even here we have this strange coincidence of the selfish interests and the common good. Otherwise, if Alcibiades's recommendations are not to the common good of Athens, there is no possibility of his going back. So he must really give good advice. And the crucial implication, there is no question about that: without an oligarchic revolution in Athens, the recall of Alcibiades is impossible. And the prospect which appears at this moment is this: an alliance between an oligarchically-ruled Athens and the Persian king against Sparta. The Athenians remain the leading sea power. I mean, if we may use our imagination or fancy, possible expansion westward would not affect the Persian king. So they could make perhaps a new Sicilian expedition under the aegis of Alcibiades and backed up by the Persian king. The decent

[xxx] Thucydides 8.45.
[xxxi] Thucydides 8.47.

alternative to this, and this is what Lichas, the Spartan, stands for, is based on the recollection of the Persian War: no truck with the Persian king. And this of course would be incompatible with Athenian expansionism. Then Athens and Sparta would have to remain moderate. You see, the Alcibiades project is in the Athenian style: Athenian expansionism remains open.

Now Alcibiades's propaganda for this proposal has great success in the Athenian army at Samos. But Phrynichus resists—you know, the man who acted so wisely in the case of Miletus. This is described in chapter 48. That is a very long chapter (we can't read it), where he talks of Phrynichus.

Reader:
And the rest thought the matter easy and worthy to be believed; but Phrynichus, who yet was general of the army, liked it not, but thought, as the truth was, that Alcibiades cared no more for the oligarchy than the democracy

LS: Now let us stop here, because here is the judgment of Thucydides himself. Thucydides himself tells us that Alcibiades has no convictions here. Yes, but surely he doesn't like democracy, that is clear. What is the alternative, if he did not care for oligarchy?

Student: Tyranny.

LS: Surely! Monarchy, which might be presented to the public eye as oligarchy, or [as] more or less democratic: that would be strictly a matter of the expediency of the moment. But he cared for Athens ruled by Alcibiades, in whatever external form. Yes, this is the first point which Phrynichus makes. And the second point is that Persia is really more afraid of Athens than of Sparta, and therefore Alcibiades's hope of an oligarchically-ruled Athens allied with Persia is unfounded. Now Phrynichus is outvoted because the army in Samos wants to have the Persian alliance, and therefore [he] betrays Alcibiades's plan, which was also the plan of the Athenian oligarchs, to the Spartans: a traitorous act, as he himself makes clear by apologizing for it. And Alcibiades, being still cleverer than Phrynichus, betrays him to the Athenians. And then Phryichus finds a new shift by which he says that, or proves that Alcibiades was the traitor, not he. This is a funny story told in chapter 50.

Student: What is the significance of the fact that in this translation it is in the present; Thucydides says that Phrynichus "betook himself to this course: He sends secret letters . . . "? Everything is in the past except for one action.

LS: Yes, that is the same in the original. And then he goes on in the present tense: "He sends."

Same Student: "He sends secret letters"; "and advertised him."

LS: This is in Greek a participle. I cannot offer you any other explanation of it except [that it is] to make it more present, more dramatic, so we see it happening now, because again he also turns again to the imperfect. By the way, here is one of the excuses at the end of the statement here: you know that "it would be excusable for him, [5]this act of treachery." How does he translate it?

Same Student: He says, "writing in plain terms the whole business and desiring to be excused if he rendered evil to his enemy with some disadvantage to his country."[xxxii]

LS: Yes, I know it very well. At the end of the same chapter there is another remark of Phrynichus in that way: "It would be blameless for him if he runs risk for his life from those people." Yes? And that he would do, and everything else, rather than be destroyed by his worst enemies. You know, this kind of immorality was kind of taken for granted by this kind of people. Alcibiades wins over Tissaphernes to Athens against the Spartan pan-Hellenic policy. Then new difficulties arise. In chapter 53—did you come to this part? Well, the religious difficulties, you know—because you must not forget that Alcibiades had been expelled because of the *mysteria* profanation and other things. I think we will take this up next time.

Here we have in chapter 53, toward the end, a real speech in book 8. And this speech is not a speech where he says, "He said about these things, or roughly these things," but it is a verbatim speech of Pisander in favor of the oligarchy and the recall of Alcibiades. For some reason Thucydides regarded it as important to have this speech verbatim. This is very strange. This speech of Pisander in favor of the establishment of oligarchy and the recall of Alcibiades convinces the Athenian *demos*. Phrynichus is out. I mean, the strict oligarchs are out. But when Tissaphernes prevents Alcibiades's deal with the Athenians—and this is partly a consequence of Alcibiades's own teaching, because Alcibiades had taught him, "Let them fight it out"—you know, the Athenians and the Spartans, to the benefit of the bystander, Persia. I think we will take this up next time.

[xxxii] Thucydides 8.50.2.

Session 17: no date
Book 8, Chapters

Leo Strauss: That was a very good paper.[i] It is a pity that your careful diction, to say nothing of the other merits, did not have its full effect because of your very swift delivery. I listened as carefully as I could, but I can't claim that I understood everything. Now I would like to bring up a few points you mentioned. Regarding the sole speech in book 8, the speech by Pisander, you raise the very sensible question: How could Thucydides have known? Did you consult commentaries on that subject?

Student: No, I didn't.

LS: Nor did I. But surely in answering this question, which is only a special form of the question of why this single speech in book 8, one would have to consider Pisander as a whole—naturally, his actions. What was your explanation?

Same Student: Of why the speech was given?

LS: Yes. Why is Pisander singled out, as it were, for that unique honor of being the sole speaker in a speechless book?

Same Student: The thing that comes to mind is that this is the only speech that Thucydides records because for some reason it is the only one that Thucydides knew. But this is a rather trivial consideration . . .

LS: It's direct what?

Same Student: It's in direct contradiction . . .

LS: That would be true in general. You could generalize from that, because I think only by the act of generalization could this become a good reason, an evident reason.

Same Student: Thucydides, in the introduction to the *History*, stresses the dichotomy, as it were, between words and deeds, and this could be an expansion of that theme.

LS: In other words, this isolated speech in that book, this speaker's speech, would show more clearly than any other case the peculiarly problematic character of speeches, how defective they are. It is nowhere stressed in the book, you know [. . .] Yes, that makes very much sense.

I do not want to comment on the many sound remarks you made about the way Thucydides throws light on Plato and Aristotle and vice versa. There are only a few more

[i] Strauss comments on a student's paper, read at the beginning of the session. The reading was not recorded.

minor points. [Theramenes], you mentioned him and you applied an epithet to him, I forgot which.

Student: [. . .]

LS: He is also mentioned in Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens*, to which you referred, and he is the example of the man who changes parties. You know he was, so to say, either a rightwing democrat or a leftwing oligarch: a trimmer, as they were commonly called. The Greeks called them [*kothorno*i], from the high shoes, the actors' shoes.[ii] That is what his enemies said, but his friends said he was a good citizen because he served the city well under every regime. By the way, there was some connection between him and Socrates; that is somehow known.

Same Student: Was he one of those [with] whom Socrates refused to get involved?

LS: [Theramenes] was executed under the Thirty by Critias, and when he had to drink the hemlock he said: "To the beautiful Critias."[iii] He was a witty man until his end. By the way, if you are interested in the full history of these men, you must also read the first book of Xenophon's Greek History, *Hellenica*, for there, for example, there is a beautiful story of Alcibiades when he comes back to Athens, which he didn't do in Thucydides. And when the Athenians were enabled by the presence of their army [for the first time] in decades to have a solemn procession, a religious procession from Athens to Eleusis, the leader of the procession was Alcibiades.[iv] Is that not in a way the peak of the whole story? Whereas Hermocrates, if I remember well,[1] was exiled as a consequence of a democratic revolution in Syracuse.[v] You remember the discussion between him and Athenagoras in Syracuse. He was the oligarchic ruler of Syracuse, and[2] [thereafter] he lived then in the east, surely also in Athens, and[3] [thereafter] he was one of the characters of a Platonic dialogue. In the *Critias* he is meant to be the last speaker: Timaeus speaking first, then Critias in the *Critias*, and then there should be a dialogue called *Hermocrates*. But this never came off. Not even Critias finished his speech. Plato prevented that for some reasons . . . At any rate, Hermocrates was . . . enough to be considered as a possible character in a Platonic dialogue. . . .

The more general question, of course, regarding the eighth book is this. Well, it may just be an accident that Thucydides died when he had written the book as we have it now.

[ii] Singular *kothornos,* English *buskin,* a type of shoe worn by actors on the classical stage. Although Strauss speaks here as if the term were applied to a class of men, in fact Xenophon's Critias presents it as an epithet of Theramenes only (*Hellenica* 2.3.31), which he explains as follows: "for as the buskin seems to fit both feet, he faces both ways." At 2.3.47-49, Theramenes defends himself as a model of nonpartisan devotion to the city; this is the view adopted by Aristotle at *Constitution of Athens* 28.5. For the whole of Xenophon's account of the falling out between Critias and Theramenes and the latter's subsequent execution, *Hellenica* 2.3.11-56.

[iii] *Hellenica* 2.3.56.

[iv] *Hellenica* 1.4.20.

[v] Thucydides 8.85.3. For the subsequent events of Hermocrates's life, including his death during an unsuccessful attempt to seize Syracuse to establish himself as tyrant there, see Diodorus Siculus *Historical Library* 13.63-75.

That is possible, we don't know. But it is also possible that the book as we have it was substantially intended to be as we have it, and we must surely consider taking into consideration this latter possibility. Thucydides did then not finish the description of the war, although he lived until after the war; there is some reference to the end of the war, and what the end of the war meant to Athens, in the book. So he knew how the war was going on and how it ended, but he did not write the end. On the other hand, if we disregard the official duties of an historian of the war—that he should describe the war from its beginning until its end—if we disregard that and look at the substance, the deeper problem arising, that problem being Sparta and Athens, one could say that at the end of the book 7 we have the complete picture of Sparta and Athens. Without book 7 we would not have that, because the tragedy of Athens has been absolutely essential for our understanding the phenomenon of Athens as a *polis*. Therefore, what do we learn from book 8 apart from the mere facts that we could not have learned from books 1 to 7? That book 8 is radically different from[4] [the first] seven books could be shown by the fact, the simple fact, that there are no speeches to speak of in the eighth book. This is a very simple sign of that. But there are some other features which are remarkable: the abundance of Thucydides's own judgments on broad questions, with the possible exception of the archaeology of course, which is also a special part, chapters 1 to 23 of the first book. There are more in this book than elsewhere.

Now what of fundamental importance, as distinguished from facts important for the course of the war, do we learn from book 8? That would be the question, and this must be somehow connected with the form of book 8. That would be the problem, which I don't believe that I could solve but which we surely must state as a question. Now what are the most striking things—I repeat, of fundamental importance, not that there was a big naval victory of the Athenians at Cynossema and this kind of thing.

Student: [. . .] In the first half of the book—the west, and then the shift to the east . . .

LS: I have a very high regard for Thucydides, but I would not give him credit for such a prophetic power. I mean, the utmost I would say in this respect is some awareness of the great potential power developing in northern Greece—you know, in the description of Sitalces.[vi] This I believe was written with his eyes open, but I don't believe he anticipated the conquest of Persia. I believe we have the first sign of that in Xenophon, who on the basis of his experience in his expeditions saw that the Persian Empire was a walkover for a properly trained Greek army. You know, they came to the center of Persia with a relatively small army under Cyrus, the younger Cyrus. [. . .][vii] But I think the most striking event in book 8 is truly Alcibiades. He throws a new light on Athens. The main forces, I mean, we have seen before, but in a new way.

Now let us first turn to the details and see if we cannot make some headway on the basis of the details regarding the general question. Now we begin with chapter 56 or

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[vi] Strauss appears to misspeak: it is not in his account of the Thracian king Sitalces but in that of the Macedonian king Archelaus (2.100.2) that Thucydides attests to "the power developing in Northen Greece." (Although the account of Archelaus is embedded in that of Sitalces.)

[vii] Strauss recounts the events described in Xenophon's *Anabasis.*

thereabouts. You remember the situation. Athens made an amazing comeback after the Sicilian disaster, surprising to everyone. But the great external and political event which was decisive was that the Spartan–Persian alliance, which would have been fatal to Athens, and which later proved to be fatal. By the way, that is also interesting, why it proved fatal, because when Cyrus, the son of the king, the younger Cyrus, was sent to Asia Minor by his father, he sided one hundred percent with the Spartans, and that sort of finished the war. Yes, but why did he do that? He wanted to finish the war and to have some Spartan armies with him, because[5] after the death of his father, he wanted to dethrone his brother. You see, complication after complication. You see, that was not merely the imperial policy of Persia, it was the special policy of Cyrus, the younger Cyrus.

At any rate, Alcibiades was the man who made this deal with Tissaphernes by which he weakens the Persian–Spartan alliance. But this of course created difficulties for Alcibiades himself. When he needs Tissaphernes, the Persian, as an ally of Athens, then Tissaphernes, being trained by Alcibiades in power politics, doesn't go along with him. Or was this arrangement more favorable to Alcibiades than [. . .] Was it not perhaps to some extent in Alcibiades's interest that he could frighten the Athenians with Tissaphernes and Tissaphernes with the Athenians? In other words, Alcibiades had to balance, and he owed his power to the fact that there were these opponents: Tissaphernes and Athens. Tissaphernes had to remain anti-Athenian to some extent, otherwise it would have led to a simple Athenian victory and then no longer [any] need for Alcibiades. And that I think is the general character of Tissaphernes's policy, just as in intra-Athenian affairs the same. The oligarchs can't use him, and the democrats can't use him, but as long as the oligarchs and the democrats are in a conflict, Alcibiades is necessary. One could say he thrives on discord. But this has also its other side: because he thrives on discord, he is a mediator, a man who brings about mediate, moderate solutions. We see here the connection between very selfish motives and very sensible political solutions. This I think comes out nowhere in the book as clearly as in the eighth book.

Now in the sequel Thucydides describes certain anti-Athenian successes—anti-Athenian on the part of the Peloponnesians—and an antidemocratic revolution in Athens takes place. First, the oligarchic revolution, with the consequence that Alcibiades is out. The Athenian oligarchy intends to make all subject cities, all cities subject to Athens, oligarchical. But this is of no help. Let us read that in chapter 64. I think that we can read the whole chapter.

Reader:
Having thus advised, they sent Pisander with half the ambassadors presently home, to follow the business there, with command to set up the oligarchy in all the cities they were to touch at by the way; the other half they sent about, some to one part [of the state] and some to another. And they sent away Diotrephes to his charge, who was now about Chios, chosen to go governor of the cities upon Thrace.

He, when he came to Thasos, deposed the people.

LS: Meaning, destroyed the democracy.

Reader:
And within two months at most after he was gone, the Thasians fortified their city, as needing no longer an aristocracy with the Athenians but expecting liberty every day by the help of the Lacedaemonians.

LS: In other words, these people, regardless of whether they are oligarchs or democrats, prefer independence to foreign rule. [. . .]

Reader:
For there were also certain of them with the Peloponnesians driven out by the Athenians; and these practiced with such in the city as were for their purpose to receive galleys into it and to cause it to revolt. So that it fell out for them just as they would have it, and that estate of theirs was set up without danger and that the people was deposed that would have withstood it. Insomuch as at Thasos it fell out contrary to what those Athenians thought which erected the oligarchy; and so, in my opinion, it did in many other places of their dominion. For the cities, now grown wise and withal resolute in their proceedings—

LS: In a better translation: "Now having caught hold of moderation."

Reader:
sought a direct liberty and preferred not before it that outside of a well-ordered government introduced by the Athenians.[viii]

LS: You see very well here a kind of transition: first he speaks of oligarchy, then of aristocracy, and then of moderation. This is the line, the slogan, you could almost say, of the oligarchic party. The point of view of the oligarchs seems to be: Oligarchy at home and empire abroad. And this policy doesn't work.

Now we come to the statement of the principle of the rule of the Five Thousand. Let us read the next chapter. In other [words], the oligarchy in Athens—practically the rule of four hundred—pretends to be the rule of five thousand.

Reader:
They with Pisander, according to the order given them, entering into the cities as they went by, dissolved the democracies; and having in some places obtained also an aid of men of arms, they came to Athens, and found the business for the greatest part, dispatched to their hands by their accomplices before their coming.

LS: "Their comrades" would be a more literal translation, [*hetairois*] in Greek. It means comrade, or it can also mean friend, but it has the more particular meaning: the members of the oligarchic class [. . .]

Reader:

[viii] Thucydides 8.64.

For certain young men, combining themselves, had not only murdered Androcles privily, a principal patron of the popular government and one that had his hand the farthest in the banishment of Alcibiades—

LS: You see how they inadvertently prepare for the return of Alcibiades.

Reader:
(whom they slew for two causes: for the sway he bare amongst the people and to gratify Alcibiades, who they thought would return and get them the friendship of Tissaphernes)—

LS: You see, at this stage the oligarchs still want Alcibiades, and they still want to preserve the empire. They have not yet given up the hope of preserving the empire.

Reader:
but had also made away divers men unfit for their design in the same manner. They had withal an oration ready made, which they delivered in public, wherein they said that there ought none to receive wages but such as served in the wars, nor to participate of the government more than five thousand, and those, such as by their purses and persons were best able to serve the commonwealth.[ix]

LS: "By their money and their bodies." How is this kind of regime called by Aristotle?

Student: A polity.

LS: A polity. And what is Aristotle's definition of a [polity]? I mean not the formal, the substantive one. Who is a full citizen in a polity?[x]

Same Student: The hoplites.

LS: The men who were sufficiently well-to-do to buy heavy arms. This is a mean between oligarchy and democracy, according to Aristotle. Now there is no parallel to that. When you had a qualified democracy in continental Europe—say, France under Louis-Philippe, you know, approximately 1830 to 1848—the principle was merely property qualifications. But here the point is not merely property qualifications [but] those who can help the city with their money and their bodies. That is very important. A bourgeoisie in the modern sense of the term, if the bourgeois is defined according to Rousseau, Hegel, and Marx as a man who is dominated by a fear of violent death, which of course means that Hobbean man is of course a bourgeois. You know, Hobbean man.

Same Student: Would an old man be excluded?

[ix] Thucydides 8.65.
[x] Aristotle discusses polity at *Politics* 1293b-1294b, 1295a-1296b, and frequently elsewhere in the work.

LS: No, no, that is not the point, because that is clear, that once a citizen, always a citizen—except if you have committed[6] [sacrilege] and other great crimes.

Same Student: I don't understand . . . Does it mean those are excluded who are wealthy and can't serve?

LS: Well, you see, the law can never be so precise, and that would be impractical. For instance, those who for some physical handicap cannot serve in the army cannot have citizens' rights, because they might be very good at counseling. You see it done in a rough way. And then you simply state, "Those who have enough money to serve as hoplites are full citizens," and then in certain cases where someone was unable, that would not disqualify him.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Five thousand men, but no statement is given there . . . of how many are excluded. But still, it is not a very small number.

Thucydides shows then in the sequel that what you had then in fact was a tyranny of the oligarchic conspirators. And the tyranny was made possible, Thucydides makes clear, by the large size of Athens. The speaker wisely remarked that this reminded [him] of key statements of Aristotle. Why does size play such a great part?

Student: They cannot get to know all their fellow citizens, hence they [. . .]

LS: That's it. In other words, freedom requires trust, and trust requires acquaintance. How can you trust a man you don't know? That is concealed from us by the fact that we take somehow for granted that we know a man whom we see over the TV. And in a strange way this is not entirely wrong, but it is not the same as to know a man from childhood and to have gone to school with him, or to have known his family—you know, this kind of very close acquaintance. Our demands for knowledge or acquaintance are much smaller, much cruder. That is important to consider.

But it is also implied, if we take the context, that what made in fact possible the tyranny of the few would of course also have made possible the tyranny of Alcibiades if things changed. Now then there follows the actual establishment of the rule of the Four Hundred. Legally five thousand had to be established as citizens, but when and who was to be decided by the Four Hundred; and that means of course that the Four Hundred were sovereign. Then we come to the passage which is very important about the chief characters in the oligarchic revolution. I think we should read that, in chapter 68.

Reader:
He that delivered this opinion was Pisander, who was also otherwise openly the forewardest to put down the democracy.

LS: He is distinguished by the fact that he is the most visible leader of the oligarchy, but why this would give him the right to be the sole speaker in book 8? I mean, why is this of some importance in the history as a whole, that the chief speaker of the Athenian oligarchy is the sole speaker?

Student: [. . .]

LS: No, no, more simply! Hitherto all speakers in Athens, all Athenian speakers in Athens were, officially at any rate, democrats. The great change effected in Athens is that you have now an Athenian speaking in Athens in favor of something like an oligarchy. But this is not sufficient. Now let us read it.

Reader:
But he that contrived the whole business, how to bring it to this pass, and had long thought upon it, was Antiphon, a man for virtue not inferior to any Athenian of his time, and the ablest of any man both to devise well and also to express well what he had devised; and though he came not into the assemblies of the people nor willingly to any other debatings, because the multitude had him in jealousy for the opinion they had of the power of his eloquence—

LS: More literally, "because of his reputation for cleverness." The Greek word has a broader range. It may also mean something like awe-inspiring. I don't know if there is an English word which would bring out both things at the same time. I mean, the slight element of the sinister—slight, it cannot be overdone.[xi]

Reader:
yet when any man that had occasion of suit, either in the courts of justice or in the assembly of the people, came to him for his counsel, this one man was able to help him most. The same man, when afterwards the government of The Four Hundred went down and was vexed of the people, was heard plead for himself when his life was in question for that business, the best of any man to this day.[xii]

LS: By the way, some people say that this was meant to put Antiphon higher than Socrates, because Socrates's plea was not as good as that of Antiphon. It may be, but one cannot be certain of that, that Thucydides means exactly this. You are quite right. The eulogy of Antiphon reminds of the eulogy of Pericles. It reminds however also of another eulogy.

Student: Themistocles [. . .]

LS: I haven't looked up the eulogy of Themistocles, but the word *aretē*, "virtue," is this mentioned in Thucydides's eulogy? I doubt it.

[xi] Strauss refers to the Greek word *deinos,* originally "fearful" or "formidable," but which by classical times had acquired the sense of "clever."
[xii] Thucydides 8.68.

Same Student: It is "genius" more than "virtue."

LS: Now where is virtue mentioned in this book?

Student: Nicias.

LS: What is the difference between his *aretē* and Nicias's *aretē*?

Student: [. . .]

LS: Not genius, but [*nenomismenēn*]. It has something to do with the *nomos*. *Nomos*-defined, I would say. And there is no such thing in the case of Antiphon. So in this respect, the praise of Antiphon is higher than the[7] [praise] of Nicias. This passage we must keep in mind as the last great eulogy in the work. According to this, Antiphon was the . . . you could put it. There are two Antiphons, by the way, one the sophist and one the orator; there is a certain mix-up. The central figure of the speech is Phrynichus . . . and he is unwilling to tolerate the return of Alcibiades, but others want Alcibiades back. Let us see now what happens after the revolution, or the *stasis*, as it is called. We see that the only thing which remains entirely unaltered are the prayers and sacrifices, in chapter 70. But it now becomes clearer than before that they do not want Alcibiades back. Whether this has something to do with the prayers and sacrifices we must judge for ourselves.

They turn to peace with Sparta, or rather the Spartan Agis. Agis hoped to surprise Athens, to take her by surprise, and he failed. Nevertheless, the negotiations with Agis are renewed and at his advice they send ambassadors to Sparta for peace. But now an obstacle arises which they had underestimated, and that is the naval might of the people in Samos. And the naval multitude was of course the multitude favorable to the extreme democracy, as Aristotle calls it. These are all very poor fellows and they wanted, naturally, no property qualification or anything of this kind.

The oligarchs, by the way, try to have an antidemocratic revolt of the Samians but fail. And in this connection[8] Thucydides notes without reference—he only reports it—how well the Samian *demos* conducted itself after the victory. They killed very few. We can read that, at the end of chapter 73. The last sentence.

Reader:
Three of the chief authors they banished, and burying in oblivion the fault of the rest, governed the state from that time forward as a democracy.[xiii]

LS: They were as decent as the Athenian democracy was after the expulsion of the Thirty Tyrants in 401.[xiv] The democratic spirit of Athens reasserts itself. The situation is described at the beginning of chapter 76.

[xiii] Thucydides 8.73.

[xiv] Strauss seems to misremember the context of Aristotle's statement at *Constitution of Athens* 22.4 on the gentleness of the Athenian people.

Reader:
So there was a contention at this time, one side compelling the city to a democracy, the other, the army to an oligarchy.

LS: You see, we have here now a break of the city and the army. They are two political units, and the city is ruled oligarchically and the army democratically. Then go on.

Reader:
And presently there was an assembly of the soldiers called, wherein they deprived the former commanders, and such captains of galleys as they had in suspicion, of their charge, and chose others, both captains of galleys and commanders, in their places, of which Thrasybulus and Thrasyllus were two.

LS: Thrasyllus was the democratic leader who . . . at the restoration of the democracy in 401.

Reader:
And they stood up and encouraged one another, both otherwise and with this: that they had no cause to be dejected for the city's revolting from them; for they at Athens, being the lesser part, had forsaken them, who were not only the greater part, but also every way the better provided. For they, having the whole navy, could compel the rest of the cities subject unto them to pay in their money as well now as if they were to set out from Athens itself. And that they also had a city, namely Samos, no weak one, but even such a one as, when they were enemies, wanted little to taking the dominion of the sea from the Athenians. That the seat of the war was the same it was before; and that they should be better able to provide themselves of things necessary, having the navy, than they should be that were at home in the city. And that they at Athens were masters of the entrance of Peiraeus, both formerly by the favour of them at Samos; and that now also, unless they restore them the government, they shall again be brought to that pass that those at Samos shall be better able to bar them the use of the sea than they shall be to bar them of Samos.[xv]

LS: Here Thucydides describes the situation of the Athenians on Samos as being . . . The situation reminds of a more famous one: the Athenians giving up their polity and being willing to sacrifice their *polis*.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, under Themistocles's leadership. In other words, this Athenian daring shows itself very clearly, and what we are seeing here is the vigor of the Athenian *demos*.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, I know, but only at that time it was [9]so hopeless. Here there was some real possibility. The democratic Athenians in Samos go then to Alcibiades. On the other hand,

[xv] Thucydides 8.76.

in the Peloponnesian camp there is dissatisfaction with Tissaphernes. We see how things move toward Alcibiades: the Athenian demos, and a rift between the Spartans and Tissaphernes necessarily work for the benefit of Alcibiades.

The Peloponnesians turn to Tissaphernes's Persian rival Pharnabazus, in chapter 81 at the beginning, where the leader of Athenian democracy, Thrasybulus, speaks in favor of Alcibiades's recall and bring[s] about a decision of the army in favor of that recall. And then we have Alcibiades's speech; however, not reported verbatim, not even in the form of a direct speech, but an indirect speech. This we must read. After all, after all we have been through with Alcibiades, we would not dare to miss this experience. Will you read this indirect speech in chapter 81?

Reader:
In the meantime, they that were in authority in Samos, and especially Thrasybulus, who after the form of government changed was still of the mind to have Alcibiades recalled, at length in an assembly persuaded the soldiers to the same. And when they had decreed for Alcibiades both his return and his security, he went to Tissaphernes and fetched Alcibiades to Samos, accounting it their only means of safety to win Tissaphernes from the Peloponnesians to themselves. An assembly being called, Alcibiades complained of and lamented the calamity of his own exile, and speaking much of the business of the state gave them no small hopes of the future time, hyperbolically magnifying his own power with Tissaphernes to the end that both they which held the oligarchy at home might the more fear him, and so the conspiracies dissolve, and also those at Samos the more honour him and take better heart unto themselves; and withal, that the enemy might object the same to the utmost to Tissaphernes and fall from their present hopes.

LS: Three birds with one stone.

Reader:
Alcibiades therefore, with the greatest boast that could be, affirmed that Tisssaphernes had undertaken to him that as long as he had anything left, if he might but trust the Athenians they should never want for maintenance; no, though he should be constrained to make money of his own bed; and that he would fetch the Phoenician fleet, now at Aspendus, not to the Peloponnesians but to the Athenians; and that then only he would rely upon the Athenians when Alcibiades called home should undertake for them.[xvi]

LS: By the way, later on—not in Thucydides, but in Xenophon—Cyrus does the same thing to the Spartan, Lysander. He showed him a golden bed, and said this too will be dissolved into money for the payment of Spartan soldiers.[xvii] So that seems to have been a Persian phrase; I don't know, but I suspect it.

[xvi] Thucydides 8.81.
[xvii] I can find no passage in Xenophon related to Cyrus and Lysander in which the former offers to coin his bed; at *Hellenica* 1.5.3, however, he does promise to break up his throne of silver and gold if financing the Spartan effort should require it.

Thucydides says later on, at the end of chapter 82, about Alcibiades policy that he frightens Tissaphernes with the Athenians and the Athenians with Tissaphernes. He also frightens the many with the few and the few with the many. And this is exactly the seamy side of the wonderful Alcibiades: Alcibiades is the teacher of moderation. We have seen that he taught the wicked sailors moderation by shortening the pay, do you remember? That is not good for them to have so much money; they will become immoderate. You remember that from last time. And now he speaks of moderation on the larger scale regarding the whole *polis*. Now let us read the beginning of chapter 83.

Reader:
When the Peloponnesians that were at Miletus heard that Alcibiades was gone home, whereas they mistrusted Tissaphernes before, now they much more accused him.[xviii]

LS: In other words, Alcibiades's boast in a way creates the reality which he had boastfully proclaimed. The enmity between the Peloponnesians and Tissaphernes increases. The oligarchs in Athens send ambassadors to Samos, but they meet there a passionate outbreak of the democratic army. That I think we should read. That is in chapter 86, about the fifth sentence. "After they had said many other things, the soldiers no longer listened but were angry and some denouncing these and other proposals, especially now that they wished to sail toward the Peiraeus."

Reader:
Though they delivered this and much more, yet the soldiers believed them not, but raged still and declared their opinions some in one sort some in another, most agreeing in this to go against Peiraeus. And now Alcibiades appeared to be the first and principal man in doing service to the commonwealth.[xix]

LS: More literally, "for the first time." Let us see what the text says. Yes, that is correct: he is "in the first place," and not "for the first time."[xx]

Student: [. . .] He is in the first place more than anyone else.

Reader:
For when the Athenians at Samos were carried headlong to invade themselves, in which case most manifestly the enemy had presently possessed himself of Ionia and the Hellespont, [it was thought that] he was the man that kept them from it. Nor was there any man at that time able to have held in the multitude but himself. He both made them to desist from the voyage and rated off from the ambassadors those that were in their own particular incensed against them.

LS: You see, he is a peacemaker, a true ruler.

Reader:

[xviii] Thucydides 8.83.
[xix] Thucydides 8.86.5.
[xx] The experts differ as to which of these ways to interpret the passage.

Whom also he sent away, giving them their answer himself: That he was not opposed to the government of The Five Thousand—

LS: Hold on. "He," "*he*." This individual Alcibiades is determined . . .

Reader:
but willed them to remove The Four Hundred and to establish the council that was before of five hundred; that if they had frugally cut off any expense so that such as were employed in the wars might be the better maintained, he did much commend them for it. And withal he exhorted them to stand out and give no ground to their enemies, for that as long as the city held out, there was great hope for them to compound; but if either part miscarry once, either this at Samos or the other at Athens, there would none be left for the enemy to compound withal.[xxi]

LS: In the sequel there is the story told also about the Argives, some people from Argos being there, and we see a last relic of Alcibiades's Argive policy. Do you remember, when he tries to mobilize the Argives against Sparta prior to the Sicilian expedition? So his Argive policy too still pays off. It is true that the advice that he gave to Tissaphernes to balance the Athenians against the Spartans and vice-versa creates a certain difficulty. Yet precisely this fact, that Tissaphernes is not one hundred percent on the Athenian side, is in Alcibiades's favor, because the continuation of the war is to the benefit of the Persians but also to the benefit of Alcibiades. Alcibiades's policy at this stage is then to achieve a reconciliation between the few, the Four Hundred, and the democratic army on the one hand; and at the same time victory in the Peloponnesian War.

In chapter 89 there is a statement which we have to consider briefly because it is ambiguous. Let us read the second half of chapter 89.

Reader:
And this was indeed the form pretended in words by The Four Hundred.

LS: Meaning, the rule of the Five Thousand.

Reader:
But most of them, through private ambition, fell upon that by which an oligarchy made out of a democracy is chiefly overthrown. For at once they claimed every one not to be equal but to be far the chief. Whereas in a democracy, when election is made, because a man is not overcome by his equals, he can better brook it. But the great power of Alcibiades at Samos and the opinion they had that the oligarchy was not like to last was it that most evidently encouraged them; and thereupon they every one contended who should most eminently become the patron of the people.[xxii]

[xxi] Thucydides 8.86.
[xxii] Thucydides 8.89.

LS: Here we must be careful, because Thucydides does not say that democracy is superior to oligarchy simply, but to an oligarchy which emerged out of a democracy. We must not overlook that.

In the sequel he presents the policy of the extreme oligarchs, of Phrynichus and Antiphon. Let us not forget that Antiphon was so highly praised: peace with Sparta. In other words, they had abandoned the Athenian empire and now are only concerned with the control of Athens. The people in Athens become dissatisfied with the Four Hundred. The Spartans make a successful attack in connection with the dealings with the Four Hundred oligarchs, and here the situation becomes very critical. And here is a statement which we must read, at the beginning of chapter 96. The main point is that they lose the island of Euboea, which is very close to Athens. [LS goes to the map] [. . .]

Reader:
When the news of that which had happened in Euboea was brought to Athens, it put the Athenians into the greatest astonishment that ever they had been in before. For neither did their loss in Sicily, though then thought great, nor any other at any time so much affright them as this. For now when the army at Samos was in rebellion, when they had no more galleys nor men to put aboard, when they were in sedition amongst themselves and in continual expectation of falling together by the ears, then in the neck of all arrived this great calamity, wherein they not only lost their galleys, but also, which was worst of all, Euboea, by which they [had] received more commodity than by Attica. How then could they choose but be dejected?

LS: Let us stop here for a moment. Why were they not reasonably discouraged? Well, I had only one commentary at my disposal when I was reading that, and so naturally I looked it up because I did not remember any such phrase in Thucydides. The commentator gives a simple parallel from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, which is of no help. I wanted to see parallels from Thucydides. Does Thucydides ever use such a rhetorical phrase? Literally translated, "How were they not reasonably discouraged?" How would it be in idiomatic English? "Was it not reasonable for them to be so discouraged?" Of a rhetorical sentence of this kind I do not recall any other case. This, of course, is not good enough—I mean, my recollection may very well be defective. But if I assume for one moment what I believe for the time being, I would say it seems to me unparalleled in its form. Now, since I think always of this strange fact that we have only a single speech in book 8, and [it is] the speech of Pisander, I wonder if this should not be added to the singularities of book 8 and perhaps help us toward a solution. I will take this up later, but let us now go on where we left off.

Reader:
But most of all they were troubled, and that for the nearness, with a fear lest upon this victory the enemy should take courage and come immediately into Peiraeus, now empty of shipping, of which they thought nothing wanting, but that they were not there already. And had they had been anything adventurous, they might have easily have done it—

LS: Literally, "if they had been somewhat more daring."

Reader:
and then, had they stayed there and besieged them, they had not only increased the sedition but also compelled the fleet to come away from Ionia to the aid of their kindred and of the whole city, through enemies to the oligarchy, and in the meantime gotten the Hellespont, Ionia, the Islands, and all places even to Euboea, and, as one may say, the whole Athenian empire into their power. But the Lacedaemonians, not only in this but in many other things, were most commodious enemies to the Athenians to war withal. For being of most different humours, the one swift, the other slow; the one adventurous, the other timorous; the Lacedaemoninas gave them great advantage, especially when their greatness was by sea.

LS: Meaning that naval war requires dispatch to a higher degree than land war.

Reader:
This was evident in the Syracusians, who, being in condition like unto them, warred best against them.[xxiii]

LS: I think the meaning of the passage is clear. As reasonable as the Athenians' discouragement was, as unreasonable was the Spartan lack of daring. And then there comes this final statement of Thucydides on Sparta and Athens. You rightly observed that it is boring, almost, if you can excuse the word, because we . . . And yet does it not have a unique significance? Again I looked up my commentary and it referred to book 1, chapter 70—that is the speech of the Corinthians in Sparta where this scheme came up for the first time. Well, there are other passages which he could have used which I remember, but all those passages have one thing in common: they are not judgments by Thucydides. And the question which I cannot answer, because my memory is not good enough for that: Is this not the first time that Thucydides makes this statement about Sparta and Athens in general—slow, swift; daring, cautious—in his own name? Perhaps one of you remembers a statement which contradicts this.

I mean, I wouldn't be surprised if this were so, because I think book 8 is particularly rich anyway in Thucydides's judgments about the broadest issues in his own name. By the way, what is called moderation so frequently is here called by the more evident term "slow." In Plato's *Charmides*, as I think I mentioned on an earlier occasion, the first definition of moderation given is slowness, whereas the first definition of the other virtue, manliness, would be quick, of course. These are naturally insufficient, but they are first indications. The moderate man is the cautious man, slow-moving. Of course one can easily refute that by saying, for example, that if someone types with extreme slowness, is this proof of moderation or of insufficient exercise? So it is not sufficient, but on first indication it is good enough.

But the main point here is this fact, that Thucydides says it in his own name. And the question which I would like to raise is: Did he ever say this in his own name? I am not aware of it. You know, when we ask this question—What are the chief characteristics of

[xxiii] Thucydides 8.96.

book eight in contradistinction to all earlier books?—I think one could say this: the almost complete absence of speeches on the one hand, and the abundance of Thucydidean judgments on the other. The difficulty of books 2 through 7, generally speaking, is this: there are so many judgments, but they are other people's—you know, Pericles's or Cleon's, or who ever it is—and so few judgments by Thucydides. And in book 8 just the opposite is true.

If we leave it at this first impression, Thucydides speaks in his own name and does not use any ambiguous mask, as it were, anymore. Book 8 is in this respect . . . But we will see. But surely chapter 97, the chapter immediately following, contains Thucydidean judgments of the utmost importance, the judgment about the Athenian regimes during his lifetime. And the main point was stated very clearly by our speaker: it was the regime of 411 which was the best that the Athenians had during his lifetime, i.e., superior to Periclean Athens above all. And we have discussed this before, because this does not necessarily mean a criticism of Pericles. Pericles might still be the greatest man described by Thucydides, but the regime was not good because it worked only by virtue of this single individual, Pericles, and that is not a good regime. It has no guarantee of permanence, because after the death of the man the regime collapses, whereas this one has political permanence

The difficulty is this: How long did it last? That is hard to say. Thucydides doesn't say a word about it, nor does Xenophon in the first two books of the *Hellenica* say anything about it. And my commentator says that nothing is known about its end. It is somehow clear that it did not last until the end of the war, 404, so one doesn't know what happened.

Student: In the translation of Aristotle's *Constitution of Athens*, Barker has a comment that it fell the following year after the return of the navy to Athens.

LS: That I have not looked up, because I have not read it. You mean in Barker's edition of the *Politics*, the appendix? The commentary which I read was made in the eighties of the last century, so that something may have been found out by digging . . . So it did not last very long.

Student: . . .

LS: Yes, sure, that we have seen. The Four Hundred was the great oligarchy. But the polity of the Five Thousand, how long did it last? That is the question. Theramenes identified himself with the Five Thousand; he brought about the transition from the Four Hundred to the Five Thousand, as Thucydides tells us. But the question is: How long did the regime of the Five Thousand last? That is after all very important, because Thucydides praises it more highly than any other Athenian regime. And finding out how long it lasted would be very important because it would tell us how far Thucydides judged the goodness of a regime by its lastingness. We know that the democracy had lasted much longer, at any rate, and he did not regard this as a sufficient criterion for preferring the regime, how long it lasted—very reasonably, I think, because some very

stupid regimes, say, the Persian Empire, lasted very much longer than any other Greek regime with the exception of Sparta. But I simply do not know. Does Butterworth give any source for that? No? Well, the thing is neither Xenophon nor Thucydides nor Aristotle say it, how long it lasted.

Student: Isn't there a problem of the chronology of the period? The *Cambridge Ancient History* points out that in the transition from Thucydides to Xenophon there is confusion over a year—

LS: There is no confusion, there is an overlapping.

Student: There is some difficulty in handling the period between Alcibiades just as he was arriving in Athens and when the pandemonium took place, whether it took place in 406, and some suggest 407.

LS: Xenophon did not have the same concern in dating by years . . . But the main difficulty is that Xenophon repeats the end of Thucydides. But I believe one can find a perfectly sound and simple explanation: he wished to make clear that it is not simply a continuation. . . .

Same Student: No, not just the subject of continuation, but apparently there is not sufficient evidence in Thucydides to date a thing exactly, and the confusion in Xenophon I see was worked over by somebody who came after him.

LS: Yes, but these things are not known things; that is all an hypothesis. What you see if you read the end of Thucydides and the beginning of Xenophon is that Xenophon retells roughly the last five or six pages of Thucydides at the beginning of his history, and that, I believe, one can explain. After all, you see the people who discuss these matters—I don't know the whole literature, but I have read a lot of it—not a single commentator of whom I know has reflected for a single moment about the fact that the very first word of Xenophon's continuation of Thucydides's history is the word "Thereafter." They say there was a preacher who began a speech, a sermon, with the word "but," but this is somehow less paradoxical than to begin a work with the word "thereafter." Precisely. Xenophon was that retired colonel—they believe he was, you know, [a] lover of horses and dogs, and wars and Spartans; and then conversely also of Socrates. Such a man would surely not begin a book with the word "thereafter." He is not so illiterate as to do that. And no one reflects upon that. I never bet, but I would be interested in hearing someone quote a book which has such an extraordinary beginning.

The solution of the riddle is in the same book, as it should be, since Xenophon was a decent man and gives not only the riddle but also the solution. The book ends with the words, roughly: "After having described the battle of Leuctra, when everyone expected now all problems of Greece would be solved by this battle, and what happened thereafter, I leave someone else to tell." So "thereafter" and "thereafter," the end. And the next man should begin his book also with the word. And the meaning of this is that after the battle of Leuctra, when everyone expected that now there would be the solution of all

problems—as we all believe, when this war is won, then everything will be wonderful—he says, in spite of that, there was greater confusion in Greece than before. And what the "thereafter" really means is Xenophon's "philosophy of history": "thereafter, thereafter, thereafter." Always confusion, but the confusion always looks different. It is different, but the main point: it is always confusion. That [is what] I think he means by that, and I believe the other difficulties would also have to be considered in the light of this character of the author and of his writings.

Now to come back to chapter 97, Thucydides praises not only this regime in itself, but he also says that as the consequence of this change of regime the situation of Athens remarkably improved afterward. This is not so simple. In one way, it is true: the great naval victory of the Athenians at Cynossema does take place afterward. It is described in chapter 106. But in other respects, it is not true; it has to do with this deeper change. You remember chapter 1 of book 8: after the Sicilian disaster there was already in a way a change of regime in Athens. Do you remember that? We discussed that last time. When the Athenians became aware of it, they set their house in order. The terms used there all[10] [are reminiscent] of the aristocratic terms, and not democratic terms.

Student: They established a council—

LS: This kind of thing, yes. And so [it is] in this sense [that] it is probably to be taken. Now this Athenian naval victory is very important, and we should have a look at it. It is described in chapter 106. We don't need the first sentence.

Reader:
For having till this day stood in fear of the Peloponnesian navy, both for the loss which they had received by little and little and also for their great loss in Sicily, they now ceased either to accuse themselves or to think highly any longer of the naval power of their enemies. The galleys they took were these—

LS: That we don't need. Go on after the enumeration of the ships.

Reader:
When they had set up a trophy in the promontory of Cynossema and taken up the wrecks and given truce to the enemies to fetch away the bodies of their dead, they presently sent away a galley with a messenger to carry news of the victory to Athens. The Athenians, upon the coming in of this galley hearing of their unexpected good fortune, were encouraged much after their loss in Euboea and after their sedition, and conceived that their estate might yet keep up if they plied the business courageously.[xxiv]

LS: This is in a way the last statement about Greek affairs. With this prospect, you can say, the book ends: the Athenians are in a difficult position, much more difficult than they were in at the beginning of the war, but there is a prospect of their winning. And why this prospect came to naught is no longer told by Thucydides, but we would have to turn to Xenophon to see why Alcibiades failed, and therewith also Athens. So

[xxiv] Thucydides 8.106.

Thucydides is not concerned, it seems, with developing that theme. Instead he turns to something else: he describes in the last two chapters a treachery of Tissaphernes's deputy and its consequences. The consequence is an act of the Peloponnesians against the deputy—open enmity between the Peloponnesians and Tisssaphernes. But—and this is the last thing, chapter 109—Tisssaphernes tries to remain on good terms with Sparta. So this hope for Athenian success, that the rift between Tissaphernes and the Spartans might lead to a Persian-Athenian alignment, is again excluded. Everything remains in the balance, and this is at the end of the book. And the last sentence is that Tissaphernes came up to Ephesus, and then he first brought a sacrifice to Artemis. Artemis is the last word, because the last sentence is generally regarded as not stemming from Thucydides. It is also omitted in one manuscript.

Thucydides surely doesn't describe the end of Athens—the final tragedy, as one could say, as distinguished from the Sicilian tragedy. Why did he not do that? The answer can only be given by considering what happened after the Sicilian tragedy which has no equivalent after the final tragedy, meaning the conquest of Athens by the Spartans in 404.

Student: Do you mean the Thirty?

LS: To what extent do the Thirty tell us something which we don't find fundamentally in the Four Hundred already? It is only more sanguinary, but the principle is the same. Well, I think what I said before, there was no Alcibiadean resurgence equivalent to that after 404. And this Alcibiadean action is as much part and parcel of Athens and of the essence of Athens as Themistocles, Pericles, and Sicily. This, I think, is the crucial element of book 8.

Now I would like to take up once more the question of the single speech in book 8, Pisander's speech in favor of the dissolution of the democracy, and which is given as a formal speech, but as a verbatim report, not as he ordinarily says, "He said suchlike things." He tries to give it verbatim. Now Pisander belongs to the extreme oligarchs. He is the one who is eventually opposed to Alcibiades, to the Alcibiadean solution, as becomes clear from many passages. But who is highly praised among this oligarchic group?

Student: Antiphon.

LS: Antiphon. Perhaps Pisander is given this speech as a substitute for a speech by Antiphon, who would really be more deserving to the highest degree. And why could Thucydides conceivably abstain from bringing verbatim an Antiphonic speech? Perhaps it is a compliment to Antiphon that one cannot write Antiphonic speeches in the way one can write even Periclean speeches. Perhaps the use of this rhetorical formula in chapter 96, which I mentioned, and which to my recollection has no parallel in Thucydides—you know, why were they not reasonably discouraged?—a turn of phrase which occurs in the same way in Xenophon's defense of Socrates. Perhaps there is a connection with that. Perhaps Thucydides uses here the rhetorical form to indicate that to some extent he could use this kind of rhetoric, but he didn't wish to do it on a large scale. I mean, that is of

course mere guesswork, but I would assume that if one would understand Thucydides fully, one would also have the answer to this particular question.

The end: sacrificing to Artemis, to a Greek goddess, a barbarian sacrificing to a Greek goddess. That is surely the end. What that means is of course very difficult to say. There is one clear parallel, I believe, and only one to that, and that needs some figuring out. I took up this question on an earlier occasion. You know Thucydides says ordinarily at the end of the year, "And this was the n^{th} year of the war which Thucydides has narrated." But in a number of cases he omits "which Thucydides has narrated." Now if one makes a complete list of the twenty or twenty-one years of the war described by Thucydides, a pattern emerges. Let me see, I have somewhere a list of that. There is no mention of Thucydides for six years, from the tenth to the fifteenth year. Now these are what I call the mean years between the first war and the second war. Chiefly, all these things occur in the fifth book. There are six subsequent years in which Thucydides simply says, "This was the *nth* year of the war," and does not add "Thucydides." And then there are only two more cases where his name is not mentioned, apart from the six mediate years. One is at the end of the first year, and this is immediately after Pericles's funeral speech. And somehow after this tremendous feat of rhetoric on the part of Pericles, of course it would seem to be inappropriate to mention a much lesser orator, Thucydides himself. So this can easily be explained, but the only case which is not intelligible is at the end of the eighth year, which is at 416. Thucydides says, "This was the end of the eighth year," without adding "which Thucydides has narrated."

Now there is one explanation possible which we discussed at the time: this is the only year in which Thucydides describes his own generalship. But what precedes immediately this remark at the end of 416 is the description of another sacrifice. That makes it so remarkable, Brasidas sacrificing to Athena, Brasidas sacrificing to the protectress of Athens—which of course makes perfect sense because Brasidas is the most Athenian amongst the Spartans. Now if this makes sense, perhaps it also makes sense that Tissaphernes sacrifices to Artemis. Artemis, at least at one part of her story, is a much more savage goddess than Athena. A savage huntress, Artemis. Now this is Artemis, the sister of Apollo, and Apollo plays a special role throughout the book—the Delphic oracle, of course—but also [at] other points.

Apollo is the first god mentioned in the whole work, and one would have to give an interpretation of the whole Archaeology to really make clear what this Apollo story means there, and that would probably lead too far. Apollo belongs much more to Sparta, and you know that Apollo promised the Spartans to help them, called or uncalled. This Athenian–Spartan cleavage is in a way reflected among the gods.

By the way, from the seventh to the tenth year, we have this arrangement: mention of Thucydides in that final phrase; no mention of Thucydides. Here you have a strict order, which draws our attention to the fact that this is not mere accident. So I see no reason to doubt that this is the end of the book as we have it. If this should be true, that there are certain difficulties in the book which cannot be explained on any hypothesis other than that Thucydides did not live to finish it, I don't know, but that of course doesn't mean

that he would have added something here. It is perfectly possible, and I think some of you know this from your own experience, to write first a first draft from beginning to end and then go over it and make such changes in various places where changes might be desirable afterward—in other words, it is not necessary that the end of a book should be written at the end of the final revision. I don't say that it was so as I said, but since we must be uncertain, we have to consider every possibility.

Student: Actually the point where Thucydides ends the book may have all the elements . . . All the elements, as you have already said, are already there. But there is one that Thucydides doesn't seem to mention, and that is that Cyrus himself had arrived to clear up the confusion—

LS: Had he already arrived there—

Same Student: Apparently the king sent Cyrus down in 407.

LS: Yes, but are we in 407? Are we already in 407 at the end of Thucydides?

Same Student: Alcibiades goes to Samos and then goes into Athens, this is . . .

LS: Yes, but that is no longer told by Thucydides; it is told by Xenophon in the first book of the *Hellenica.* That is not here. This much we can take from the probably spurious last sentence, when the winter has come to its end, following this summer, the twenty first year of the war will be completed.

Student: [. . .]

LS: No, that is—the overall question as far as this book is concerned is: What is the theme of Thucydides? Naturally, the Peloponnesian War. That is an absolutely safe answer, but it is not a sufficient answer. From what point of view did he view the Peloponnesian War? And that is not sufficient; and if one were to say, as I would not hesitate to say, that the overall points of view would seem to be these: first of all, the question of the relation between right and necessity, right and compulsion, the so-called question of the right of the stronger; and then beyond that, the question of Sparta and Athens, meaning, the question is not ultimately who committed an unjust act by starting the war by breaking the truce. Although that is an important question, it is not the decisive question, because it is more important to know who deserved to win: which city was the better city? This question is obviously not the same with which city broke the truce . . . i.e., [it is] the question of Sparta and Athens. And if we look at the history from this point of view, we see that no deeper stratum of the analysis is reached than has been reached by the end of book 7. I know this from my last experience, because I saw somehow [that] what is presented in book 5 about Sparta—you know, in the central year of the war—was in a way the bottom, the Spartan comedy; and then when I saw the development of the theme of the Athenian tragedy, in fact in book 7, that seemed to clinch this, the complete picture.

Then I would say that this Alcibiadean policy, his return to Athens after this strange expulsion and this fatal expulsion, is absolutely necessary to complete the picture of Athens. The fact that Athens was eventually defeated and deprived of her empire does not throw a new light on the substance of Athens, because the Athenian empire would come to an end sometime. That was stated at the very beginning, where Thucydides makes this experiment of standing at the ruins of Athens and Sparta.[xxv] But the essence, if I may use this non-Thucydidean term, of Athens requires for its completion that we look at this strange figure of Alcibiades, this remarkable figure of Alcibiades, and the fact that Athens returned to moderation for the first time after the Persian Wars, becoming in a way the old Athens, the moderate Athens, through Alcibiades. Without this event, which is surely not a tragedy, which has something of a comedy but is not merely a comedy, I think the picture of Athens would not be complete. In other words, I think it is a good ending, as one should expect from such a writer. But many questions remain, and one of them is a really thorough analysis, which I am sure some classical scholar must have done and I simply don't know it, a very close stylistic analysis about the difference between book 8 and the preceding books, and to see which of these stylistic differences are relevant and significant and which are not. That would be very important.

Student: I am a little at a loss for memory, but it seems to me that I read that the Athenians did not have any insurrection that I know of prior to the eighth book. In other words, what happened in Corcyra . . . happened to Athens in the eighth book.

LS: You mean an amazing stability.

Same Student: I mean that, but I mean also . . . a very great horror.

LS: That is a very good point. In other words, you would say this: in a way, the history begins with—no, that is not quite correct. It begins with Corcyra and not with the Corcyraean [*stasis*]. But still, the Corcyraean affair was even at the beginning connected with *stasis*, although it was the not big and classic *stasis* of some years later. You know, that had to do with *stasis* in Epidamnus. Yes, that is true. In other words, you think that the Athenian *stasis* as such—

Student: I know they persecuted people—

LS: I know, but [this] would be individuals but would not be—no violent change of regime in Athens occurred before.

Student: The plague is made in comparison with the—

LS: That is quite true, and that is important, but I would still say that this [is] comprised under the heading Alcibiades. If you want to, you can say Alcibiades is to be subsumed under Athenian *stasis*—the dissolution of the democracy. All right, but both things belong together. But it is an important point to consider.

[xxv] Thucydides 1.10.2.

Same Student: Is there not simply a dissolution of the actual Athenian democracy, but a perspective thrown upon the place of the people as such? Even an elevation of the *demos* in the last book, which isn't present in the previous books.

LS: You mean the behavior of the soldiers and sailors in Samos?

Same Student: That, and the behavior of the Four Hundred at Athens: the one [is] praised implicitly and the other is condemned implicitly by Thucydides.

LS: You think of course also of the wise behavior of the Athenians after Sicily, what he describes in the first chapter of book 8. You mean that too, of course. Now how is that? Let us consider the praise of Sparta and Chios. They were praised for being moderate in prosperity. Now the Athenians were not moderate in prosperity. What is his point? That they were courageous in disaster, in defeat. And that is indeed important, you are quite right, that this courage in defeat which is in contrast to Pylos, that this is indeed an important element of Athens. But this would be a Platonic antithesis. We would have to rewrite it in Thucydidean terms to make it stick, this distinction between moderation and manliness. Sparta, moderation; Athens, manliness. It is, by the way, funny, because the Spartans were particularly proud of their manliness. So Sparta would be the woman in Plato's language, and Athens the man. It would be very funny. But still, how would Thucydides call it? Moderation would be the same, and what is the opposite? The daring, which is not so different from the courageous. A moderation which looks best in peace, prosperity; and daring which looks best in defeat and disaster. And that is quite true, that does not come out before book 8.

Student: If that were true, if the real contribution of a *demos* like that becomes clear, that might be linked up with the lack of speeches also.

LS: How?

Same Student: Somehow the bodily virtues of the people have a real place in the regime, the reason being that speeches have something to do with distinctive virtue which the people do not, may not, have. But that distinctive virtue which is so highly praised in Antiphon, for example, is nevertheless politically insufficient, as Antiphon's regime was politically insufficient. It was in practice a sort of tyranny. The balance is somehow restored. This is just speculation.

LS: Linking it up, the daring, the courageous, the manly: deeds, silent deeds rather than words. I think also what you say must be pursued by all means. So I think this proves that it is necessary, and legitimate and useful, to raise this question: What do we learn not about the course of the war, but about Athens that we didn't know before? Because about Sparta we learn nothing anymore—I mean, that their navy had improved, one could expect that from the very beginning. But Sparta we know perfectly by not later than the middle of the fifth book; you know, the victory of Mantinea when Thucydides praises their marvelous battle order, but they win the battle only by disregarding the battle order. And also the Spartans are so secretive, and you can nevertheless find out the number of

their fighters because they have such a marvelous order. It almost reminds of some things the Nazis did: they were also very secretive but they kept such a good order that it became possible to find—well, I know from my own experience, when then they expropriated people they kept exact records of them, and I am sure there are absolutely exact records of the number of people killed, only they have disappeared when it became too impractical to preserve them. You know this conflict between secretiveness and revealed orderliness.

Student: [. . .]

LS: I can't follow you.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: But that is a theme which goes through the book, and which is pointed out by Pericles explicitly: that there must be something in common between private and public interest.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: But the point is that commerce doesn't play such a role in Thucydides; I mean it is barely mentioned, alluded to.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: I cannot agree with this point, but there is something in what you said of importance. You know when you spoke of the Chians and their similarity with the Spartans, the link-up between their moderation and their large slave population—the seamy side, as they call it, of moderation. Of course this kind of thing has also a comical element. We see here, how should I say it, a very dignified and a bit pompous people who by a very dignified vestment, as it were, conceal their baseness. This is of course somewhat comical, it is quite true. I thought of this: the clearest case to me is Alcibiades; that in a way, when book 7 describes the tragedy of Athens in a very moving manner, that in book 8 we have something like a satyr play, a comical conclusion afterwards. But at any rate, this would need a much more thorough consideration of the details than we can now afford, and I think the simplest thing to do is . . .

Student: I remember you said that the end of the book was some analogy to the ending of the Trojan War, insofar as no one sees the destruction of Troy or the destruction of Athens. Now do you mean that Thucydides merely tries to give a happy ending . . .

LS: No, no, what it means in Homer, I do not know, but regarding Thucydides one could say one thing. Whatever it may mean in Homer, I could easily see Thucydides give also such an indication that his work is an imitation of Homer—imitation is not quite adequate; that he is having a contest with Homer. You remember at the very beginning: the adorning, magnifying Homer; the nonadorning Thucydides, who however claims that

his work might not be less enjoyable, less pleasing, than adorned work of the adored Homer. Do you remember that? That surely I would not hesitate to assert. Yes, but is it not also intelligible that a writer like Homer and like Thucydides abstain from describing the most terrible things, for this very simple reason, the same reason for which Homer refrained from describing beautiful Helen: she is indescribably beautiful. And there are things which are indescribably terrible. And in a way, Troy's fall was much more indescribably terrible because of the mass slaughter which did not take place in Athens. But still, since it was Thucydides's hometown, the mere conquest of it was in a way as bad for him as for the non-Trojan Homer to describe the fall of Troy. We all have sufficient experience, unfortunately, of terror and terrible things. It is sufficient only to mention the fact that Athens was taken by the Spartans to know what that means. I mean, not much imagination is needed for visualizing that.

Student: [. . .]

LS: That could be due to the fact—how was the precise situation, that they were not together?

Same Student: They split up, and Demosthenes was surrounded. His men capitulated, but Thucydides never says that Demosthenes did, and then the news is brought to Nicias, and Nicias heard of the capitulation of Demosthenes's troops. It seems to me that when we look back over the many things connected with Demosthenes, his actions, that there might be a case for him—

LS: I am absolutely sure of that, as I made it clear by calling him the unsung hero. I mean, unsung because Thucydides does not give an explicit eulogy of him, but in reading—even apart from the Sicilian discussion, already before—he stands out as a particularly attractive human being. And my private explanation, if I may say so, which I would never publish for fear of public spanking, because the severe rule is if a scholar makes an assertion that he cannot prove, he is publicly spanked—and he is also particularly spanked if he proves something which the readers don't like. That is a good rule to remember. I would say this. Just as Brasidas was felt to be a reincarnation of Achilles, I would say Demosthenes is the reincarnation of Odysseus. The evidence is slender but sufficient for me because it depends [on] what you understand by evidence. Demosthenes is surely a very great man, but I still would say the highest figure of the characters—I mean highest in [the] sense of understanding, not of rulership—regarding rulership I believe of the people described Alcibiades is highest. "Described," because Demosthenes is only briefly sketched. But as far as understanding is concerned, I believe that Diodotus is very high. And here the question is: Was Diodotus, so called, a real person? One doesn't know anything of him, unless they found something last year which I don't know.

Student: Some commentator I read thought he knew who Diodotus's father was. I can't remember the name of it, but he did seem to have—

LS: Yes, but he is presented as a live being, and not as being generated by some Athenian.

Same Student: [. . .]

LS: Yes, but—I haven't seen that—but what I have read in Gomme, which is a rather recent commentary, the name Diodotus was a name rather common in Athens, but this particular Diodotus is not known.[xxvi] But however this may be, this cannot be answered with any certainty, because even in the case of Euphemus, where I think it is almost obvious that he is not a live person—but by chance the most euphemistic Athenian speaker was named Euphemus; it could happen.

Student: [. . .]

LS: Is there not one of the orators called . . . You know how funny that Nicias is called after victory[xxvii]—how wonderfully correct until the Sicilian expedition and how terrible after the Sicilian expedition. Similarly, Laches comes from kicking.[xxviii]

Same Student: And Demosthenes, the man of the people.[xxix]

LS: This is of course in a way intelligible. But Plato makes fun all the time—Meletus the man who cared, the caretaker, and also the accuser of Socrates: out of taking care for the young Athenians he accuses Socrates.[xxx] The Athenians must have been in the habit of punning about names, and their names are more meaningful than our names are, especially taking such beautiful names all the time. So that in one dialogue, when Socrates sees a father with his son, Socrates asks the father what is his beautiful name, and to my information there was nothing beautiful in that boy, but he was *a priori* sure that he would have a beautiful name. So the incentives for punning were very great. We have also some of our names which can be used for punning, but not so easily. I think we will conclude then with this most relevant remark.

[xxvi] Gomme, *Historical Commentary* 2. 313. Subsequently Martin Ostwald identified a number of Athenians named Eucrates (one of them the brother of Nicias) who might have been the father of our Diodotus. Cf. Ostwald, "Diodotus the son of Eucrates," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 20 (1979): 5ff. The scholarly consensus presumes that Diodotus must have been a real person (however unknown to us otherwise) who spoke twice in favor of sparing the Mytilenian *demos.*

[xxvii] Strauss refers to the etymology of Nicias's name, from Greek *nikē,*

[xxviii] In the transcript: "(kicking)," suggesting perhaps the transcriber's uncertainty. If the transcription is accurate, it is unclear why Strauss would assert this etymology: a more usual one for the name Laches would relate it to the word for share or lot (as in the casting of lots).

[xxix] The student errs in his interpretation of this name: Demosthenes means the might or strength of the people.

[xxx] Plato *Apology of Socrates* 24c-26a.

Endnotes

Session 1

[1] Deleted “.”
[2] Deleted “of.”
[3] Deleted “Hobbes’ introduction.”
[4] Deleted “of.”
[5] Deleted “Hobbes.”
[6] Deleted “his.”
[7] Deleted “…. (G) ….”
[8] Deleted “really”
[9] Moved “perhaps.”
[10] Deleted “in-“
[11] Deleted “don’t.”
[12] Deleted “we know.”
[13] Deleted “this.”
[14] Deleted “they.”
[15] Deleted “21.”
[16] Deleted “Thucydides.”
[17] Deleted “inspired.”
[18] Deleted “*sōphrōn*”
[19] Moved “only.”
[20] Deleted “Peloponnesian.”
[21] Deleted “told.”
[22] Deleted “a.”
[23] Deleted “which means.”
[24] Deleted “22.”
[25] Deleted “they.”
[26] Deleted “s theses.”
[27] Deleted “the.”
[28] Deleted “in itself.”
[29] Deleted “Well.”
[30] Deleted “26.”
[31] Deleted “Peace.”
[32] Deleted “even” and moved it forward in the sentence.
[33] Deleted “Thucydides—that is exactly the point. In the funeral speech of Pericles later, the.” From this passage, moved “of Pericles later.”
[34] Deleted “Krylon”
[35] Deleted “94.”
[36]

Session 2

[1] Deleted “that.”
[2] Deleted “to.”
[3] Deleted “the.”
[4] Deleted “itself.”
[5] Deleted “motion.”
[6] Deleted “into.”
[7] Deleted “possibility.”
[8] Deleted “the truest allegation.”
[9] Deleted “then there are.”
[10] Moved “just.”
[11] Deleted “it.”

[12] Deleted “Now.”
[13] Deleted “…..”
[14] Deleted “in.”
[15] Deleted “Now.”
[16] Deleted “what is it that we see—or did I omit one of the points?—what is the precise point? Ja! Now when.”
[17] Deleted “and there is one crucial point.”
[18] Deleted “that.”
[19] Deleted “There.”
[20] Deleted “you know”
[21] Deleted “base.”
[22] Deleted “in chapter 49.”
[23] Moved “‘War like a land power’—in other words, they fought like land soldiers just standing on: no operations of the boat.”
[24] Deleted “….G……”
[25] Deleted “They remain at rest.”
[26] Deleted “that.”
[27] Moved “might not.”
[28] Deleted “Athens at peace with Corinth.”
[29] Deleted “they.”
[30] Deleted “overrides.”
[31] Deleted “,”.
[32] Deleted “the.”
[33] Deleted “the colonies.”
[34] Deleted “are.”
[35] Deleted “it.”
[36] Deleted “so.”
[37] Deleted “oneself.”
[38] Deleted “….”
[39] Deleted “in this.”
[40] Deleted “….G……”
[41] Moved “but.”
[42] Deleted “and.”
[43] Moved “again.”
[44] Deleted “he.”
[45] Deleted “of deliberate….G….and rest.”
[46] Deleted “He indicates, however.”
[47] Deleted “the.”
[48] Deleted “say.”
[49] Deleted “rights.”
[50] Deleted “calling.”
[51] Deleted “Also.”
[52] Deleted “At.”
[53] Deleted “they.”
[54] Deleted “yet.” Moved “at this time.”
[55] Deleted “that Archidamus.”
[56] Deleted “that.”
[57] Deleted “theater.”
[58] Deleted “they make this”
[59] Deleted “They make a very unpleasant situation.”
[60] Deleted “describe.”

Session 3

[1] Deleted “…(G)….”
[2] Deleted “Athens the tyrant city.”
[3] Moved “to take fancy figures.”
[4] Deleted “of.”

[5] Deleted “the.”
[6] Deleted “this.”
[7] Deleted “but.”
[8] Moved “fear.”
[9] Deleted “Kinos.”
[10] Deleted “I have read him more before”
[11] Deleted “(?).”
[12] Deleted “that.”
[13] Deleted “achieves.”
[14] Deleted “that.”
[15] Deleted “Yet.”
[16] Deleted “it is quite clear, in the last place.”
[17] Moved “to which we come now.”
[18] Deleted “this.”
[19] Moved “just.”
[20] Moved “among many others.” Deleted “that.”
[21] Deleted “probably.”
[22] Deleted “care.”
[23] Deleted “had.”
[24] Deleted “its.”
[25] Deleted “in itself.”
[26] Deleted “he.”
[27] Deleted “indice.”
[28] Deleted [*andrēs*].
[29] Deleted “to.”
[30] Deleted “such a.”
[31] Deleted “ruler democracy” as unintelligible; what LS actually said remains unclear.
[32] Moved “to run” to the end of the clause.
[33] Deleted “tolerating”
[34] Deleted “[it].”.
[35] Deleted “the truest cause is the least visible cause.”
[36] Deleted “__a.”
[37] Deleted “acquisition.”

Session 4

[1] Deleted “resided.”
[2] Deleted “that is.”
[3]
[4] Moved “out.”
[5] Deleted “a.”
[6] Deleted “more of a.”
[7] Deleted “making the siege of.’
[8] Deleted “all.”
[9] Deleted “a clear.”
[10] Deleted “that.”
[11] Deleted “simple.”
[12] Deleted “had.”
[13] Deleted “a.”
[14] Deleted “old Pallas Athens.’
[15] Deleted “that the war will.”
[16] Deleted “neither.”
[17] Deleted “is.”
[18] Deleted “to.”
[19] Deleted “agreement. And.”
[20] Deleted “but.”
[21] Deleted “(G).”

[22] Deleted “on.”
[23] Deleted “[inaudible].”
[24] Deleted “[studies?].”
[25] Deleted “but.”
[26] Deleted “the.”
[27] Deleted “Thucydides.”
[28] Deleted “him.”
[29] Deleted “who said the.”
[30] Deleted “in.”
[31] Deleted “or.”
[32] Deleted “take simple sides.”
[33] Deleted “there.”
[34] Deleted “at.”
[35] Deleted “Dionisus.”

Session 5

[1] Deleted “relations to Athens due to the.”
[2] Deleted “his family’s relations.”
[3] Deleted “by.”
[4] Deleted “that.”
[5] Deleted “in.”
[6] Deleted “, ever.”
[7] Deleted “people.”
[8] Deleted “pre-Phillopolean”
[9] Deleted “and.”
[10] Deleted “which.”
[11] Deleted “that in.”
[12] Moved “he didn’t know before.”
[13] Moved “of the devastation of Attica and of the plague.”
[14] Deleted “and.”
[15] Deleted “the.”
[16] Deleted “be” and moved it toward the back of the sentence.
[17] Deleted “which.”
[18] Deleted “for Pericles—let me say that.”
[19] Deleted “[…].”
[20] Deleted “with.”
[21] Deleted “…..”
[22] Moved “Pericles’s supremely intelligent war policy.”
[23] Deleted “that.”
[24] Deleted “in the case of both speeches.”
[25] Deleted “is.”
[26] Deleted “and.”
[27] Deleted “that.”
[28] Deleted “In.”
[29] Deleted “this.”
[30] Deleted “a change, also.”
[31] Deleted “that.”
[32] Deleted “that is so.”
[33] Deleted “on.”
[34] Moved “not in the sense of being a strict sort of tragedy.” Deleted “that.”
[35] Deleted “and.”
[36] Deleted “that.”
[37] Deleted “read.”
[38] Deleted “to.”
[39] Deleted “that.”

Session 6

[1] Deleted “made.”
[2] Deleted “to.”
[3] Deleted “that.”
[4] Deleted “but there also”
[5] Deleted “a.”
[6] Deleted “impression.”
[7] Deleted “the Mytilenaeans.”
[8] Deleted “that.”
[9] Deleted “support.”
[10] Moved “any more.”
[11] Deleted “He.”
[12] Deleted “of killing.”
[13] Deleted “in chapter 34.”
[14] Deleted “;You you remember the Spartan king, when he discovers— –he uses the same arguments.”
[15] Deleted “you You know. , Tthis.”
[16] Deleted “In.”
[17] Deleted “38.”
[18] Deleted “you.”
[19] Deleted “that would be.”
[20] Deleted “passage.”
[21] Deleted “it you make.”
[22] Deleted “that.”
[23] Deleted “are.”
[24] Deleted “that.”
[25] Deleted “he.”
[26] Deleted “question.”
[27] Deleted “leads.”
[28] Deleted “he”.
[29] Moved “grounds.”
[30] Moved “ground.”
[31] Deleted “, or rather by.”
[32] Deleted “makes a clumsy—he is too obvious to follow it—.”
[33] Deleted “of.”
[34] Deleted “it is.”
[35] Deleted “is there”
[36] Deleted “namely,.”
[37] Deleted “, connection,.”
[38] Deleted “it.”
[39] Deleted “the.”
[40] Deleted “that.”
[41] Deleted “that.”
[42] Deleted “if.”

Session 7

[1] Deleted “even.”
[3] Deleted “the.”
[4] Deleted “and”
[5] Moved “that.”
[6] Deleted “one of these explicit remarks”
[7] Deleted “that.”
[8] Deleted “the.”
[9] Deleted “with.”
[10] Deleted “That.”

[11] Deleted “Diodotus.”
[12] Moved “he says.”
[13] Deleted “end.”
[14] Deleted “the.”
[15] Deleted ‘the.”
[16] Deleted “the.”
[17] Deleted “the.”
[18] Deleted “longer.”
[19] Deleted “patriocy.”
[20] Deleted “but.”
[21] Deleted “as.”
[22] Deleted “but.”
[23] Deleted “and.”
[24] Deleted “by.”
[25] Moved “who.”
[26] Deleted “where.”
[27] Deleted “on.”
[28] Deleted “superficially.”
[29] Deleted “the.”
[30] Deleted “in.”
[31] Deleted “they are.”
[32] Deleted “saying.”

Session 8
[1] Deleted “what he wants”
[2] Deleted “to”
[3] Deleted “is the same of the sea.”
[4] Deleted “of.”
[5] Deleted “an arrow, i.e. a female instrument.”
[6] Deleted “they.”
[7] Deketed “
[8] Deleted “of.”
[9] Deleted “of.”
[10] Deleted “Now we do not have yet to decide—”
[11] Deleted “is this possible. I mean”
[12] Deleted “it will happen”
[13] Deleted “from later.”
[14] Deleted “in.”
[15] Deleted “and.”
[16] Deleted “of.”
[17] Deleted “there is.”
[18] Deleted “it became”
[19] Moved “in the Gettysburg Address.”

Session 9
[1] Deleted “is.”
[2] Deleted “if.”
[3] Deleted “than.”
[4] Delerted “impressed.”
[5] Deleted “I.”
[6] Deleted “But.”
[7] Deleted “wait.”
[8] Deleted “made”
[9] Deleted “of.”
[10] Deleted “that” and moved it to the end of the sentence.
[11] Deleted “to.”

Session 10

[1]
[2] Deleted “centers.”
[3] Deleted “with.”
[4] Deleted “within.”
[5] Deleted “that.”
[6] Moved “as.”
[7] Deleted “I.”
[8] Deleted “the state.”
[9] Deleted “made.” Alternatively LS might have been using *experience* in its French sense of *experiment: “*We have made the experiment of…..”
[10] The following clause initially read “and Athens being an ally of Sparta—of Argos.”
[11] Deleted “to.”
[12] Deleted “that.”
[13] Deleted “in.”
[14] Deleted “were.”
[15] Moved “[Mr. Strauss regards diverse questioners.].”
[16] Deleted “to finally say.”

Session 11

[1] Deleted “with.”
[2] Deleted “you they use the.”
[3] Deleted “you know there was also—”
[4] Deleted “is.”
[5] Deleted “first.”
[6] Deleted “, the …(G)…..”
[7] Deleted “are all.”
[8] Deleted “the fifth century, or”
[9] Deleted “(I can’t say?).”
[10] Deleted ”his.”
[11] Deleted “all but.”
[12] Deleted “is.”
[13] Deleted “cam only be used.”

Session 12

[1] Deleted “side-light.”
[2] Deleted “and.”
[3] Deleted “by.”
[4] Deleted “by.”
[5] Deleted “of.”
[6] Deleted “by.”
[1] Deleted “as.”
[2] Deleted “of.”
[3] Deleted “… (G)….”
[4] Deleted “the.”
[5] Deleted “as.”
[6] Deleted “this accompanied.”
[7] Deleted “that.”
[8] Deleted “there was”
[9] Deleted “of.”
[1] Deleted “we must pursue this point about”
[2] Deleted “you know”
[3] Deleted “as.”

[4] Deleted “of.”
[5] Deleted “to.”
[6] Deleted “says.”
[7] Deleted “from.”
[1] This word makes no sense, so one suspects an error in transcription.
[2] Deleted “they go.”
[3] Deleted “our.”
[4]
[5] Deleted “in a noble”
[6] Deleted “a.”
[1] Deleted “intelligent.”
[2] Deleted “becomes.”
[3] Deleted “which.”
[4] Deleted “you know”
[5] Deleted “you know”
[1] Deleted: “he.”
[2] Deleted: “therefore.”
[3] Deleted: “therefore.”
[4] Deleted “
[5] Deleted: “when.”
[6] Deleted: “sacricy.”
[7] Deleted “case.”
[8] Deleted: “with.”
[9] Deleted “such a”
[10] Deleted “reminded.”